

Who Am I? Examining the Evolving Identity of an Art Therapy Graduate Student

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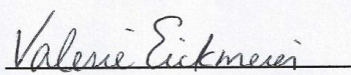


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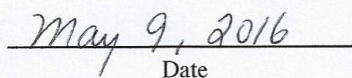


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ABSTRACT

This arts-based phenomenological study aimed to explore the evolving identity of a graduate art therapy student. This participant created a series of artwork and completed an evaluation measure called the Twenty-Statement Test for 8 weeks. This participant then engaged in a semi-structured interview with an independent reviewer to complete an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis of the combination of artwork and the Twenty-Statement Test results to identify common themes and determine the influences of the evolving identity. The major findings of the assessment were that: 1) The combination of art making, the Twenty-Statement Test, and an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis created a framework that facilitated the exploration of the evolving identity; 2) Different media were used by the participant weekly to answer the question, “Who Am I?” and consequently elicited different results for the descriptive section of the analysis; 3) Through the employment of this project, this researcher gained an understanding of the influences that have shaped identity development beyond those of familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational dynamics; 4) The interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis informed five themes of evolving identity that were unique to this participant. These themes included: Diverse, not fitting in, vulnerability, structure, and personality; 5) New insights of self were established through the exploration of identity development.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to Strawberry, the woman who gave so many people a reason to live life to their fullest potential. May your spirit continue to support me along my journey as an art therapist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am so appreciative of the amount of support I have received throughout this process and would like to thank the many people who have made this research possible. First, I would like to thank Lindsay Shively for the endless hours spent editing my work, providing feedback, and sending words of encouragement my way. You gave me the confidence to keep going. Second, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Eileen Misluk for her time, effort, support, Twizzlers, and comic relief through the process of the study. I would be lost without your direction and curiosity. Finally, I would like to thank my family members for their everlasting support and encouragement to achieve what I perceived as impossible. I could not have done this without you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although perceptions of identity differ a great deal among different scholars (Erikson, 1968; Graefe, Jun, Kyle, & Manning, 2015; Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; & Deaux, 2001), it is generally agreed that identity involves the unity of an individual's personality over a period of time, and it enables one to be themselves in an assortment of circumstances (Para, 2008; Rimskii, 2011). Rimskii states that "there is currently no single definition of identity," suggesting that "identity is experienced as an ongoing process that lives throughout the body and is always contextually situated" (2011, p. 79; Walton, 2015, p. 396).

In different contexts, one's identity is influenced by a variety of factors (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009; Para, 2008). Although there are many components to identity formation, for the purposes of this study, identified influences will include familial, which encompasses primary attachment and family structure; sociocultural, which incorporates social support, religion, history, nationality, race and ethnicity; educational; and occupational influences.

Adaptations to identity in various circumstantial situations contribute to the simultaneous existence of varying identities and in some cases results in a crisis or gap "because the adaptation of identity lags behind the changes in reality" (Rimiskii, 2011, p. 80). In the development of identity, adaptations are a natural process one undergoes while interacting in various environments, and the formation of a constant personality is developed through learned experiences. Identity, however, is continually evolving. Researchers have explored the phenomenon of identity, allowing one to gain insight and understanding of the influences that shape this constantly evolving aspect of self (Sharifi, 2015; Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009; Para, 2008; Rimskii, 2011; Hilton & Liu, 2005; Deaux, 2001; Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe,

2004; Grafe et al., 2015). The majority of the published research emphasizes the specific influences of evolving identity. Evolving identity is defined as the metamorphosis of the individual's perception of self, which is influenced by interactions with others, and the individual's acquisition of professional experience. (Lusch, 2007). However, the research fails to provide a framework or guide to aid an individual in this exploratory process (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

The exploration of one's evolving identity becomes particularly important within graduate education, as the focus of study is specialized and individual development occurs in accordance with a sense of professional direction (Feen-Calligan, 2005). Graduate art therapy students experience an evolution of identity as they work towards a master's degree in art therapy. The initial year of graduate art therapy education prepares students with didactic and experiential coursework that offers a foundation for the profession of art therapy. In addition, the student is introduced to theories of practice, experiential work, and intervention in preparation for the emergence into fieldwork, which begins during the first semester. The second year of study is composed of advanced didactic courses, advanced internship experiences, job search preparation, and transition into independence within the profession. A potential benefit of studying the developing identity of a second year graduate student is an increase in self-awareness (O'Gorman, 2005; Bolton, 2006), resulting in a more informed clinician, which may enhance clinical competencies.

Self-exploration and self-acceptance precedes understanding and acceptance of a client. Thus, students should have an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of their identity as they work through an educational program (Bolton, 2006). Graduate art therapy programs include coursework to assist in this process. For instance, during group supervision, lifespan

development, and cultural and social diversity in art therapy, course materials integrate the themes of self-exploration and self-acceptance through art therapy. This is achieved by providing opportunities for exploration and investigation into one's personal experiences in life, school, and the profession.

McNiff (1986) emphasized the importance of personal awareness in becoming an effective clinician. It is essential for an art therapist to first understand their values and beliefs in order to be respectful of, and to work effectively with individuals of different values (Cattaneo, 1994; Ganzalez-Dolginko, 2000). Although the learning process for the art therapist is a life-long endeavor, the journey begins in graduate school (Feen-Calligan, 2005). In order to promote the exploration of one's evolving identity in graduate education, a framework for exploration needs to be established prior to the process taking place.

The purpose of this study is to explore the evolving identity of a graduate art therapy student in their final semester. It is hypothesized that through an arts-based phenomenological study of identity, the results obtained can be translated into a framework. This framework will aim to provide an avenue for exploring influences of identity development for graduate art therapy students. Accomplishment of this arts-based phenomenological study will be achieved through a process of art making, employing the Twenty-Statement Test to provide subjective statements to the art, and utilizing an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis to move beyond the descriptions or core concepts and seek meanings that are embedded in lived experiences. The data will be compiled and analyzed to potentially gain insight into specific influences of the researcher's identity.

An individual's identity is impacted by numerous factors that ultimately contribute to the

constant evolution of one's identity. The evolution of identity is particularly important in art therapy graduate educational experience, as it will potentially influence the role of a clinician and the clients that are receiving services. Through the employment of an arts-based phenomenological study of identity, an exploration of an art therapy graduate student's identity development will occur and serve to establish a framework that will be used to replicate the study.

Definition of Terms

Achievement identity occurs when an individual has explored alternatives to their values, and has chosen and committed to their current belief system (Para, 2008).

Art-based study is a mode of inquiry, which utilizes the creative process as the primary mode of exploration (McNiff, 1998).

Art therapist is a Master's level clinician that uses the creative process to enhance and improve the mental, physical, and emotional well being of individuals of all ages (AATA, 2015).

Descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry is a method of analyzing data, which the researcher is interested in discovering meanings of phenomena from lived experiences rather than from universal principals (Kleinman, 2004).

Diffusion identity takes place when an individual is actively exploring, but has not committed to the values or belief system (Para, 2008).

Evolving identity is the metamorphosis of the individual's perception of self, which is influenced by interaction with others, and the individual's acquisition of professional experience. (Lusch, 2007).

Foreclosure identity is characterized by an absence of exploration and commitment of values and beliefs (Para, 2008).

Identity is defined as a product of self-concept, which evolves over the course of one's life (Para, 2008).

Interpretive phenomenology results in a detailed interpretation of the meanings and structures of a particular phenomenon, as it is experienced first-hand (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015).

Moratorium identity occurs when individuals are strongly committed to their beliefs, but have not actively explored alternatives (Pare, 2008).

Personality is defined as the physical and emotional qualities and/or traits used to describe the individual's character (Rothbart, 1965).

Phenomenological study approach is a qualitative method of inquiry that probes the meaning of human experience through the narration of the participant (Kleinman, 2004).

Phenomenology is a discipline that investigates lived experiences to reveal what lies hidden (Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, Sixsmith, & Tuohy, 2013).

Professional identity is defined as a product of biography, personal choices, and social circumstances through which professionals begin to test and accept the traditions and obligations of a profession (Feen-Calligan, 2005, p.122).

Sociocultural factors are supportive relationships of others and the influence of the collective culture one experiences, (Hamilton & White, 2008) which include the influence of society/social, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and history.

Superficial self is the sense of self concerned only with what is obvious or apparent to others (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Twenty-Statement Test is an instrument used to measure self-concept (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity is composed of several influential factors including familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences (Sharifi, 2015, p. 1; Graefe et al., 2015). These influential factors lay the groundwork for understanding the development and formation of one's identity. Through the employment of the phenomenological art-based study, insight into other influential factors may emerge and inform the researcher. A review of relevant literature and research studies provide applicable examples as well as a foundation for these influential factors.

Identity

Identity is a product of self-concept, which evolves over the course of one's life (Para, 2008). An individual's identity consists of a cohesive set of personal values regarding career goals, relationships, and political and religious values (Erikson, 1968; Bauer, Edwards, Faber, & Wetchler, 2003). Despite identity's central role as the principal foundation for much contemporary research, "a theoretical framework related to self and identity has been underappreciated in literature" (Grafe et al., 2015, p. 426), which has resulted in an absence of a framework for exploration and research.

Identity is defined as a "basic and internal aspect by which a person is connected to his past and feels integrity and continuity to his life," and serves as the "central dynamic in explaining one's emotions" (Sharifi, 2015, p. 1; Graefe et al., 2015). Identity has been found to affect and be affected by different aspects of life, including social and cultural influences, religion, and nationality; serving as a method to characterize a person as a group member, role player, and unique person (Sharifi, 2015; Graefe et al., 2015). As a result of these influences, scholars have recognized identity as "a necessary requirement" of one's being (Para, 2008); thus,

in the absence of an identity, human beings “cannot live well” (Sharifi, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, Bauer et al. (2003) explained that achievement of a stable identity produces an integrated sense of self, allowing future development and adjustment throughout life.

The process of identity formation involves the development of a foundation of self that is capable of evolving through the progression of various life stages (Para 2008). Erikson’s work on identity formation proposed that the foundation for healthy adult functioning is a result of the exploration of identity possibilities and the commitment to a specific identity (1968). He developed eight stages of psychosocial development focused on the crisis that occurs at each stage of life. Each developmental phase corresponds with the specific social, psychological, and biological event that occurs during the lifespan. Although Erikson’s fifth stage, identity achievement verse role confusion, is introduced during adolescence, an individual’s identity continues to evolve during early, middle, and later adulthood (Jackson, Jones, Morrill, & Vaterlaus, 2014).

According to Anderson et al. (2013), identity formation brings a sense of agency or autonomy, self-directedness, integrity, responsibility, commitment, and psychological maturity. Moreover, people who have made identity commitments, ideally through a process of exploration, tend to engage in less risk behaviors, have fewer mental health problems, and experience greater psychological well-being. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) conducted a literature review of identity development describing the process as an “iterative process of person-context transactions” (p. 39). Bosma and Kunnen explained that conflicts within these transactions produce deviance within development as the trajectory is determined by the ways in which conflicts are resolved. Findings revealed that optimal development requires balance between assimilation and accommodation of an individual’s commitment. The study concluded that

openness to change regarding environmental and social support, and developmental history are important determinants in the process of identity development.

Many diverse factors work in tandem to sculpt the development of self, including familial, sociocultural, religious, ethnic, historic, educational, and occupational influences. Accordingly, these influential factors fundamentally impact the unique aspects of self, such as one's ideals, beliefs, and values (Para, 2008).

Familial influences

Primary attachment. “A critical context for understanding identity...is the family” (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009, p. 445; Bauer et al., 2003; Jackson, Jones, Morrill, & Vaterlaus, 2014). According to Para (2008), “families often lay the groundwork for identity formation by helping children successfully negotiate earlier developmental stages and families act as model for the individual” (p. 97). According to Jackson, Jones, Morrill, and Vaterlaus (2014), parents and siblings influence the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative. An individual's identity begins to develop in early childhood, as the infant learns attachment styles in response to the primary caretaker. Trust for the infant entails life sustenance, meaning, and faith that the environment will provide for survival (Jackson, Jones, Morrill, & Vaterlaus, 2014). According to Para, “adolescence and emerging adulthood is the point in development in which individuals begin to explore who they are, what they personally value and believe in, and what directions they will follow in life” (Para, 2008, p. 97).

Bowlby (1958) considered the importance of the child's relationship with their mother in terms of social, emotional, and cognitive development. Ultimately, this led Bowlby to formulate what has come to be known as Attachment Theory. Attachment theory suggests attachment is to

be understood within an evolutionary context in which the caregiver provides safety to the infant (Bowlby, 1958). In the 1970's, Ainsworth expanded upon Bowlby's original Attachment Theory by developing the study, "Strange Situations" (Ainsworth, 1973). Through this study, the profound effect attachment has on an infant's behavior was analyzed and understood. Ainsworth achieved her findings by recording the response of a child upon removal of the primary caregiver, observing varying infant responses, and ultimately determining that the unique reactions hinged on the differing attachment styles the infant was exposed to during earlier stages of development.

The works of theorists and researchers such as Bowlby and Ainsworth have shaped the modern understanding of Attachment Theory, aiding in the understanding of identity formation. Bowlby and Ainsworth's findings demonstrate that the process of providing an infant or child with comfort and care establishes a sense of trust between caregiver and infant/child. If the caregiver is dependable, then a secure base to explore the world is created. The attachment relationship adapts as a result of the caregiver's response to the child, as well as influences how an individual explores the world and formulates one's values and beliefs. In other words, "each positive resolution in previous stages increases the likelihood of a positive resolution to the identity task in adolescence and early adulthood" (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009, p. 445).

Familial relationships that demonstrate a high quality of love, acceptance, support, and encouragement can promote the exploration of identity throughout various life stages, influence the perception of healthy relationships, and provide structure for exploration (Para, 2008). Therefore, close and supportive family members act as a valuable resource for identity formation and the necessary ego strength for flexibility and change (Para 2008; Bauer et al., 2003).

Para (2008) conducted a literature review of research concerning the role of interpersonal relationships on identity development. The literature explored sources of support in identity development, determinants of identity formation, and theory of development, which ultimately examined the role of familial and peer support on the process of identity formation. The study underlined familial influences as a foundation for identity formation, explaining that familial influences help children successfully negotiate early developmental stages, as well as act as a model for an individual to learn from. This study explained that understanding the link between positive interpersonal relationships and identity formation can be influential in examining differences in an individual's identity. It was concluded that high quality relationships are associated with increased levels of competence. Furthermore, the study revealed that competent individuals are better prepared to explore options and make commitments in regards to their values and beliefs.

Furthermore, Consedine, Gillespie, Magai, and Montague (2003) published a qualitative study, which highlighted the significance of attachment patterns in later life, specifically as older adults become more vulnerable to chronic illness and personal loss. Consedine et al. (2003) employed a face-to-face interview to collect data of demographic information, adult attachment, early rearing experiences, and current religiosity. Findings revealed that adult attachment is influenced by childhood socialization patterns and current religiosity. The study found significant ethnic differences in relation between adult attachment and childhood socialization practices. African American adults, compared to European Americans, were more likely to report that the caregiver's response to emotional upset was unrewarding or reflected punitive emotional socialization practices. In contrast, European American adults were more likely than African American adults to report that they coped with childhood negative affect by inhibiting

their emotions. These results highlighted the importance of examining contextual differences in all phases of attachment.

Family structure. Despite the influence of family structure on identity formation, it remains a rarely studied subject matter (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009). According to Bosma and Kunnen (2001), families are an unconscious source for stimulating identity development. For instance, Ainsworth (1973) found that when studying the development of infant-mother attachment, if the primary caregiver or family structure is unable or neglects to provide secure attachment for the child, the child may extend their scope beyond the familial influence (Ainsworth, 1973; Para, 2008). Rimskii (2011) stated,

If the relations and interactions among a child, his parents, and his nearest relatives who they are in regular contact with are established properly, the child will develop a normal identity. But this norm itself is socially conditioned, determined by the culture in which the child is brought up, by the stereotypes of individuals' relationships, and their behavior in the society that surrounds them. (p. 81)

The familial unit serves as a significant contributing factor in the formation of a child's identity. Specifically, the presence and/or absence of primary attachment and the extent and structure of familial relationships have proven to be notable components when considering the development of childhood identity. Inadequacies or variations of the familial structure such as blended families, divorced or single parent families, father absence, and mother absence have a measurable effect in modifying a child's beliefs, values, and point of view (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009).

The research of Bartoszuk and Pittman (2009) highlighted the influence of family structure and gender, which ultimately impacted an individual's identity. They studied the relationship between family structure, gender, and age to examine identity exploration and commitment among young adults. Bartoszuk and Pittman employed Marcia's (1966) model of identity. Through the use of Erikson's (1968) theoretical model of identity formation, Marcia (1966) operationalized the identity formation process (Bauer, Edwards, Faber & Wetchler, 2003). Marcia (1966) suggested a different model of identity, which evaluates the occurrence or non-occurrence of exploration of alternatives and the achievement or non-achievement of commitment to values and beliefs. The model identifies four different identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure (Para, 2008; Sharifi, 2015). Achievement occurs when an individual has explored alternatives to their values, and has chosen and committed to their current belief system. Moratorium takes place when an individual is actively exploring, but has not committed to the values. Diffusion is characterized by an absence of exploration and commitment. Foreclosure occurs when there is a strong commitment to an individual's beliefs but they have not actively explored alternatives.

The status paradigm has made significant contributions to identity development and is utilized as a dominant research tool throughout multiple studies to differentiate the status of an individual's identity development (Para, 2008; Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2009; Skorckov & Vondracek, 2011; Sharifi, 2015). From this research, specific findings revealed that there is a greater likelihood of diffused identity associated to single parent households. It was concluded that young adults within these same households were less likely to explore the alternatives and less likely to commit to their values and belief systems due to the influence of the family structure.

Bauer et al. (2003) conducted a qualitative study, which examined the association between attachment, family structure, and identity formation. The study utilized an assortment of instruments to assess the participants. The Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status was used to provide a continuously measured index for each of the four identity statuses: achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure. The Structural Family Interaction Scale-Revised was utilized to measure the family structure. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment Scale was employed to assess the attachment between adolescents and their parent. The results of the study indicated that unresolved spousal conflict is associated with low levels of attachment in adolescence, and attachment to the father is linked with achieved identity and diffused identity status in adolescents. In other words, the influence of the attachment with the father is linked to the two extreme identity statuses; achieved identity is an individual's commitment to their current belief system and diffused identity is the absence of exploration and commitment. Ultimately, the observations derived from Bauer's assessment highlight the significance family structure and attachment play in identity formation, particularly during one's adolescence.

Sociocultural influence. Just as family can influence identity by providing support and nurturance, sociocultural factors can also influence one's identity. Social support becomes an increasingly important resource through life because it offers supplementary structure and exploration outside of the family. Social support is defined as the supportive relationship of others and the influence of the collective culture one experiences (Hamilton & White, 2008). According to Kaufman (2014), individuals are viewed as social constructs because their identity is shaped by external social factors. "We come to understand who we are and form a self-definition by embracing the attitudes of the significant others with whom we interact" (Mead,

1934, p. 36) In the process of identity formation, the individual learns to embrace the “role of the generalized other” and gain an understanding of a more complete picture of self within a larger social world (Kaufman, 2014, p. 36).

According to Rimskii (2011), individuals who are involved in social groups benefit from membership, as the group imparts trust, loyalty, and solidarity with others. Society can offer alternative viewpoints, provide opportunities that foster exploration, and influence the status of one’s identity. “Belonging to significant social groups makes it possible for individuals to satisfy their various needs for self-preservation, protection, recognition, self-realization, and other factors that motivate individuals to engage in identification” (Rimskii, 2011, p.82).

In addition to social support, society offers diversity, models, and opportunities for the exploration of beliefs and values, which make up identity (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Jackson, Jones, Morrill, & Vaterlaus, 2014). Diversity can be offered in a number of dimensions including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. Models offered by society can be influential as they represent a phenomenon in which an individual can idolize. Additionally, society offers opportunities for an individual to step away from the familiar and learn through an exposure to diversity.

Religion. In addition to social groups and society, Oppong (2013) found that religion influences identity. Spirituality affects the behavior of youth, allowing them to be associated with something “beyond themselves” (Oppong, 2013). Religion facilitates an individual’s independence, individuality, and identity formation (Oppong, 2013; Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson (1968), religion facilitates the development of devotedness, integrity, morality, and overall behavior, further demonstrating the effects social groups have on the process of identity

formation.

Oppong (2013) conducted a literature review exploring the link between religion and identity formation from three viewpoints. These viewpoints include “religion as expression of deep sense of unity and its linkage with identity formation, the link between identity formation and ethnicity in terms of forging identity formation, and the link between religion and identity formation in reference to youth’s religiousness and search for identity” (Oppong, 2013, p. 15). This study concluded that there is a positive correlation between identity formation and religion, which implies that identity achievement is highly related to the internalization of religious commitment. Findings revealed religious attendance is related to foreclosure and achievement, while identity diffusion was associated with lower rates of religious attendance.

Historical. Historical occurrences have also had a profound impact on the formation of identity. History renders humanity with an account of “who we are, where we came from, and where we should be going” (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 1). These create “socially shared representations of history” and play an important role in the maintenance, creation, and alteration of identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 1; Devine-Wright, 2003). Impactful historical events influence the development of identities by providing an understanding of appropriate cultural reactions to current challenges, which ultimately aids in the construction of a group’s identity and a group’s relation to outsiders (Liu and Hilton, 2005). Identification with one’s group and through the perspective of the group, the socialization patterns change over time as the present is predominantly shaped by the past (Devine-Wright, 2003).

One’s memories of a historical event differ from formal recordings or documentation because there are subjective, fluid, and mobile connections an individual or cohort makes

ultimately adapting the event to each individual (Bretherton & Mellor, 2003). On a social level, memories are collectively shared as they continue to inhabit the same social world, commemorate the past together, and make sense of their lives together through social interactions. Additionally, the core of memories are relived and renewed by each generation through documented and oral histories.

Moreover, the research of Hilton and Liu (2005) identified how the past weighs on the present; ultimately emphasizing the influence history has on the development of an individual's identity within a social context. Hilton and Liu (2005) argued that the group's representation of its history has a significant impact on its sense of identity and its response to new challenges. This comparative study considers the influence of history on the trajectory of reaction to challenges of social groups. It was concluded that the salience of positive and negative aspects of a group's history affect feelings of collective shame and guilt. This study has been instrumental in supporting the implications that history plays an important role in the maintenance, creation, and alteration of one's identity.

Ethnicity, race, and nationality. Ethnicity, race, and nationality serve as central elements of self-definition, acting as important means of identifying a global sense of self (Deaux, 2001; Cross et al., 2014). Deaux (2001) states that nationality, ethnicity, language, and country of origin define culture, ultimately affecting friendship networks, social and cultural activities, marriage, and family (Kaida, Sano, & Tenkorang, 2015). Sociocultural factors influence the evolution of identity through the exposure of diversity, models, and opportunities of exploration of one's beliefs and values. Naturally intertwined with early familial influences, sociocultural factors provide a larger global understanding of identity and self-concept.

The developmental progression of identification with ethnicity, race, and nationality is marked by milestones that are inherent in each developmental stage (Cross et al., 2014). In early childhood, the individual simultaneously goes through the process of differentiation of self and other while experiencing ethnic labeling, knowledge, and constancy. During middle childhood, the individual is exposed to the salience, centrality, affect, and public regard to their in-group and out-group gaining awareness of bias and understanding of social hierarchy. In adolescence, the individual experiences the process of negotiation, internalization of cultural values, exploration, and collective self-verification (Deaux, 2001). Through these experiences, an individual develops the following abilities of social importance: an understanding of how one's ethnicity and race impact one's life, understanding of common fate and destiny based on the ethnic or racial group membership; identity self denial in which there is an attempt to hide or minimize one's ethnic-racial background; and certainty in the identification with one's ethnic and racial experiences such as discrimination, and racism.

Those experiences could lead a person to question one's identity (Cross et al., 2014). The same developmental milestones are extended from adolescence into young adulthood/emerging adulthood; however during this time the individual experiences further elaboration, narrowing, with the transformation of new possibilities. The experiences within each process mark a milestone within the development of one's identity helping to organize an understanding of how and when the different components begin to emerge (Cross et al., 2014).

Cross et al. (2014) conducted a study group which focused on ethnic and racial identity in the 21st Century. The study explored the developmental timeline of ethnic and racial identity formation, emphasizing the various influences one's identity experiences during each developmental period. This multidimensional psychological construct reflects the beliefs and

attitudes about one's ethnic-racial group membership as well as the process of development over time. Findings revealed that different outcomes are expected to emerge based on the interface of an individual's emerging developmental capabilities and specific properties of the social context. As a result, stronger family ethnic socialization efforts may encourage increased exploration of ethnicity during adolescence, whereas if family ethnic socialization was similarly high in early childhood, increases in exploration may not be evident.

Adoption. A challenge arises when adoptees are asked to integrate all aspects of self into their identity, because there are several variables one must consider. According to Brabender, Padovano-Janik, and Rutter, identity formation is a far more complicated task for adopted individuals (2015). They must integrate identity elements from the family they have been placed with as well as origins of biological characteristics they possess (Brabender, Padovano-Janik, and Rutter, 2015). Adoptees are also considered minorities and many of them have many minority statuses. Walton (2015) conducted a phenomenological study on the development of identity in adopted children as they transition into their adoptive countries. The study aimed to understand the lived experience of transnational adoption. This study conducted email and face-to-face interviews to engage with adults that were adopted into international non-familiar nationality adoptive families. The research demonstrated that identity is an embodying event in which the individual embodies separate identities within different contexts. For instance, the individual embodies an identity within their adoptive country that is separate from the identity embodied within their originated country, consequently highlighting the importance of sociocultural influences of ethnicity and nationality on the development of identity.

Immigration and Minorities. According to Banerjee, Lauermann, and Matthews (2014), socially marginalized individuals experience challenges that influence one's identity formation.

These challenges generally begin during adolescence as one contends with unique social problems and cultural stigma that can influence self-perceptions and academic motivation (Kaida, Sano, & Tenkorang, 2015). Ethnic and racial identity is a salient influence on one's identity for minorities (Douglas & Umaña-Taylor, 2015), as many life choices are affected by minority statuses throughout the course of one's life such as marriage, home ownership, and employment (Kaida, Sano, & Tenkorang, 2015). Immigrants experience disadvantages linked to their ethnicity, facing social and economic challenges, experiencing racial discrimination, and integration in a marginalized, underclass community marked by lower earnings.

The study by Banerjee, Lauermann, and Matthews (2014), focused specifically on African American and Latino adolescence in urban schools where two distinct dimensions of identity were identified that were influenced by minority status. An identification questionnaire was utilized to obtain data regarding the role of self in identity formation. The study concluded that the two distinct dimensions of one's emergent identity were value and belonging. Results showed that participants with a higher sense of self-efficacy had a greater sense of value and belonging.

Educational influences. Although schools and universities serve as a conduit for obtaining knowledge, they also act as the epicenter for “developing potential talents and educating the personality of the students” (Sharifi, 2015, p. 1). Educational institutions have an enormous influence on how individuals view themselves by affecting one's hopes, dreams, and motivation for achievement (Browne, 2012). Experimental investigations performed by Browne (2012) concluded that achievement performance in schools is related to educational experiences starting in adolescence and continuing through higher education, ultimately impacting a student's development of identity.

More specifically, education is identified as another function to provide identity, laying foundational groundwork for what individuals learn and cultivating an individual's capabilities (Browne, 2012). Pursuant to this logic, scholars have noted that student identities possess a sense of fluidity changing from "one context to another." This fluidity is dependent upon the school structure, disciplinary protocol, and actions of school personnel (Davidson, 1996). Careful analysis of school records, statistical data, and academic standards revealed that educational institutions influence "self-perceptions, social interactions, attitudes, knowledge, and ultimately influence a student's life and career choices" (Davidson, 1996; Dermer & Randick, 2013). Several studies demonstrated that individual differences exist in identity formation during secondary education such as patterns of personal adjustment, vocational behavior, and cognitive and moral development (Bauer et al., 2003; Waterman, 1985; Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Marcia, 1988).

Sharifi (2015) utilized a correlational method to investigate the relationship of individual identity and mental health in undergraduate students. A questionnaire on mental health symptoms, which was comprised of general psychiatric symptomology and the Bennion-Adam Inventory for measuring identity status, was administered. Four different identity statuses in the paradigm were assessed: achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure (Para, 2008; Sharifi, 2015). Results revealed that identity for females was aligned with the need for personal independence, collaboration, intimacy, and caring for others. Male identity aligned with the need for autonomy, competence, and individuality. Females in fixed identity statuses such as achievement and foreclosure are found to be more adaptive. Males with high-level identity statuses including achievement and moratorium are associated with well-being and adaptability. In conclusion, Sharifi (2015) recommended education systems provide opportunities such as

workshops for identity exploration. This recommendation aims to help students achieve their identity, rapidly avoiding the “negative outcome of being exposed to diffusion identity status” (p. 5). The diffusion identity status may lead to the inability to gain a sense of self or identity.

Occupational standards require individuals to understand and apply their personal strengths and educational competencies in a professional setting (Dermer & Randick, 2013). “In particular, it is apparent that experiences in higher education and in work have enabled them to establish a connection between notions of their personal and professional identities and the practice associated with their career aspirations” (Leach, 2015, p. 60). Graduate art therapy programs impart the same principles of self-exploration (Feen-Calligan, 2012; Deaver & Elkins, 2013).

Occupational influences. Occupational influences have frequently been conceptualized as a major component of one’s sense of self (Kroger, 2007; Skorckov & Vondracek, 2011). The complex, evolving structure of meanings in which the individual links their motivations and competencies with acceptable career roles, influences one’s identity (Skorckov & Vondracek, 2011). According to Holland (1985) during childhood and adolescence, one’s identity in regards to occupation begins to take shape based on preferred activities, interests, competencies, and values. Erikson (1968) explained that individuals build a relationship with society at large through identification with an occupation. As the individual negotiates the values of the occupation, one’s identity is shaped to recognize membership of the professional field (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). In exploring “the way graduates perceive...their careers, the relationship between their emerging sense of identity, and the strategies they use when

seeking to build their careers,” individuals reported that their career was central to their identity (Leach, 2015, p. 53).

Health Care. According to Jackson & Nelson (2003), the development of a professional identity is important in all human service fields that require responsibility for and close interaction with other human beings. A facet of professional identity, is “both the collective identity of a profession and an individual’s own sense of the professional role” (Feen-Calligan, 2005, p. 122). According to Feen-Calligan (2005), professional identity has been further described “as a product of biography, personal choices, and social circumstances through which professionals begin to test and accept the traditions and obligations of a profession” (p.122). More specifically, professional identity can be described through two lenses: the individual’s identity or sense of self within the acknowledged role; and the collective understanding from members of the specific profession being represented (Feen-Calligan, 2012).

Fiene, Miller, & Washington (2007), conducted a qualitative case study that demonstrates the influence occupation has on one’s identity by examining a female superintendent’s profession, identity, and entry into the position. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the complex factors that influence one’s identity. The primary complex factors include occupation specific training programs and education needed for professional development. Findings reveal occupational networks that employ a collegial, supportive, empowering style were recognized as being most influential in the achievement of identity within the profession.

Leach (2015) employed a phenomenological approach obtaining qualitative data through email interviewing to understand the realities of career building after graduation. The study examined an extensive review of career literature that aimed to identify with the following

themes: how graduates perceive and enact their careers; how the careers of graduates evolve in today's complex work environment; the interplay between a person's career decision-making and the context within which decisions are made; the relationship between the graduates' identities and strategies used when seeking to build their careers; and the implications of the research findings for post-compulsory education (Leach, 2015). During the interviews of the 18 graduates, the following themes emerged: their career paths; career and the person's sense of identity; transitions; the politics of careers and hazards of passage; the importance of community and dialogue with others, personal agency, and learning the craft. Leach (2015) stated "knowledge, skills and social capital students gain through higher education... are valuable assets when seeking employment and building their careers" (p.60). Furthermore, the study suggested that identity and the processes of transition into the course of their careers are "fluid and subjective concepts" (Leach, 2015, p. 60).

The occupational influence is significant in the development of one's identity as it serves to shape an individual's world perspective and set of values. One's identity is defined as a product of self-concept, which evolves over one's life. Identity is influenced by many overlapping factors that work in tandem. These factors include the following: familial, sociocultural, religious, ethnic, historical, educational, and occupational influences. Throughout the progression of one's life these factors foster the continuous evolution of identity.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a discipline that investigates lived experiences to reveal what lies hidden (Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, Sixsmith, & Tuohy, 2013; Conroy, 2003). According to Matau and Van Der Wal (2015), phenomenology has become a major philosophy and research method in the humanities, human sciences, and arts. The concept of phenomenology emerged

from the work of philosophers Kant, Hegel, and Brentano; Husserl was inspired to develop phenomenology, the study of the lived experience, from their writings (Dowling, 2007; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Acknowledged as the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl introduced the phenomenological movement in the early 20th century. He identified phenomenology as a philosophy that returns to and explores the reality of life and living (Cooney et al., 2013). Husserl's approach investigated things as they appeared in people's consciousness that would enable the inquirer to come face to face with the ultimate structures of consciousness or the essence of a particular experience (Cooney et al., 2013). Phenomenological inquiry begins by asking the question, 'What is the nature and meaning of the phenomenon under study?' Then the phenomenon is explored through the perspective of those who experienced it first-hand. The phenomenological researcher seeks to offer accounts of time, body, space, and relations, as they are lived by those affected by the phenomenon (Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015). Husserl emphasized the importance of understanding the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry as essential to understand other strands of phenomenology. The objective of descriptive phenomenology is to describe things, as they appear to consciousness, setting aside natural, everyday assumptions to get back to a state in which the phenomenon is in its purest form, taking away attitudes, prejudices and other influencing factors.

Martin Heidegger, Husserl's student, developed interpretive phenomenology by extending hermeneutics, the philosophy of interpretation (Reiners, 2012; Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015). By studying the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world, hermeneutics moves beyond the description or core concept of the experience, seeking meanings that are incorporated in everyday occurrences (Reiners, 2012; Conroy, 2003). Heidegger

believed it to be impossible to negate experiences related to the phenomenon under study. He explained that personal awareness is intrinsic to phenomenological research (Finlay, 2008; Reiners, 2012; Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015). Finlay (2008) stated that to understand we must recognize what has influenced our understanding and view of the world. Rather than setting this understanding aside, it is brought to the forefront to be recognized as influences and biases. Pre-understandings are integrated and become part of the research findings, being considered valuable guides that make research more meaningful (Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015; Conroy, 2003).

In terms of outcomes, interpretive phenomenology focuses on the understanding of socially situated meanings, habits, and practices that would otherwise be overlooked (Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015). Heidegger stated that it is important to recognize that people's realities are influenced by the world in which they live, because these experiences are linked to their familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences (Cooney et al., 2013). He explained that interpretation is inevitable, thus, whenever an object is interpreted it is grounded in an interpreter's pre-understanding of the object, making it impossible for the interpreter to transcend it (Matau & Van Der Wal, 2015). This means that due to the integration of pre-understandings becoming part of the findings, there is no way to surpass the interpretation.

Phenomenological studies. Fakhry and Hawamdeh (2013) explored the attributes of the therapeutic relationship from the perspective of psychiatric nurses. The study utilized an interpretive phenomenological method to focus on the in-depth meanings, beliefs, and practices of psychiatric nurses. The researcher employed two taped interviews conducted by the principal investigator. The initial interview was semi-structured using general questions, which elicited an in-depth description of the therapeutic relationship from the participant's perspective. The

second interview served as a method of verifying and clarifying the meanings from the first interview. Kleinman's (2004) descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry was utilized to analyze the data gathered from the two taped interviews. The data was read and reread, identifying themes and subthemes utilizing a psychiatric nurse scholar as an independent reviewer. The thematic structure was then presented to each participant for validation. As a result, four major themes emerged from the study: provision of physical care, conveying safety and security, protection, and companionship. The results emphasized that an effective therapeutic relationship between client and nurse require specific attributes. Such attributes include attention to the client's physical care as it ranged from assisting clients to supervising them during activities of daily living; establishment of safety and security as a result of being trustworthy, genuine, and accessible; protection; and friendliness.

Black, De Witt, and Ploeg (2010) studied the perspective of older individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia to understand the experience of living alone. The study utilized the Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological methodology, which emphasizes the concept of space and time. After completing the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry to identify themes and subthemes the data was analyzed in an iterative process, identifying and questioning connections with Heidegger's philosophy. The overall theme of "holding back time" was identified as the temporal meaning of living alone with dementia. The study applied a framework of rigor for interpretive phenomenology. Rigor is an interpretive method that highlights five expressions: balanced integration, openness, concreteness, resonance, and actualization.

Phenomenology has served as an important method of exploring what lies hidden within oneself. Employed by many scholars, phenomenology has served as a critical tool in

investigating effective therapeutic treatments, and understanding socially situated meanings, habits, and practices. Ultimately, the implementation of phenomenological inquiry has provided a framework to better understand the perspectives of dementia patients by examining specific expressions.

Although there is no single definition of identity, scholars are in mutual agreement that identity is influenced by a variety of factors. Previous studies have shown that the following factors significantly contribute and/or influence identity formation: family, society and culture, religion, history, nationality and/or ethnicity, education, and occupation. Additionally, phenomenological studies have aided in the understanding of identity formation by exploring what lies underneath these broad categories and ultimately understand the uniqueness of one's evolving identity.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

An arts-based phenomenological study was conducted through a multi-step process of art making, employing the Twenty Statement Test (TST) to provide subjective statements to the art, and utilizing interpretive phenomenology to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomenon. A phenomenological approach is a qualitative method of inquiry that probes the meaning of human experience through the narration of the participant (Kleinman, 2004). The art-based mode of inquiry utilizes the creative process as the primary mode of exploration (McNiff, 1998). The TST was used to provide subjective statements that support the artwork created, whereas the interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis was used to gain insight into what was influencing the phenomenon in the TST and artwork.

The TST is an instrument used to measure self-concept (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). This test is a qualitative measure of the self that makes explicit how an individual mediates the social environment in different ways by indexing how self-related information is differentially organized across individuals (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). The TST asks participants to provide 20 statements in response to the question “Who am I?” This method of measure has been frequently utilized in examining cultural differences and gender differences in the individual’s sense of self (Bochner, 1994; Dhawan, Naidu, Rettek, Roseman, & Thapa, 1995; Ma & Schoeneman, 1997; Markus & Oyserman, 1989).

“Phenomenology does not dictate to phenomena but rather it wants to understand how phenomena present themselves to consciousness and the elucidation of this process is a descriptive task” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 4). The data collection of a phenomenological study was gathered through the description provided by the lived experience. Phenomenology is interested

in the activities of consciousness and the objects that present themselves to consciousness (Giorgi, 2012). As the researcher created art in response to the question “Who Am I,” the artwork presented phenomena to consciousness. These phenomena were then translated into statements and categorized into themes by an independent reviewer employing an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis. Upon conclusion of the experimental investigation, it was hypothesized that the researcher would identify a framework that can be utilized by art therapy graduate students to explore their evolving identity.

Location and Time

The study was conducted in a private classroom space provided by the university. The art-based phenomenological study proceeded over 8 weeks during the spring of 2016. Each session was 60 minutes in length, and this included art making and the completion of the TST.

Participants

This study assessed a twenty-four-year-old art therapy graduate student who was enrolled in the second year of a full-time Master’s of Art Therapy Program at Herron School of Art and Design.

The participant was completing course work including: Advanced Art Therapy Practice: Specialized Populations, Professional Issues Capstone II, and Group Supervision in addition to Advanced Internship at a hospital, which specializes in the treatment of substance addictions. This study focused on the different influences, both objective and subjective, of the experiences that impacted the development of an art therapy graduate student’s evolving identity.

Procedure and Materials

This qualitative study examined the researcher as the sole participant. Accordingly, no informed consent or recruitment materials were required for this study. The TST provided the

description of subjective statements (see Appendix A). The TST followed the completion of artwork and was used to explore the evolving identity of the participant.

Each session began by creating artwork in response to the question “Who am I?” The participant was given 45 minutes to create art (see Appendix F-M). Following the art making, the researcher implemented the TST by completing the following direction: “There are twenty numbered blanks on the page below. Please write twenty answers to the simple question ‘Who am I’ in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Don’t worry about logic or ‘importance.’ Go fairly fast, for time is limited” (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954, p. 69). The participant was then provided 12 minutes for this portion of the task (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954).

The materials utilized changed each week throughout the duration of the study. The researcher used the data collection form (see Appendix A) to answer the question “Who Am I?” while reflecting on the artwork.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection incorporated the artwork created and the TST responses (see Appendix F-M). These responses served as a description of the phenomena. To analyze the data produced through the art making and TST, an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis was used. This study employed an independent reviewer that served as a clinical supervisor for and educator of the researcher for the duration of the researcher’s two-year graduate experience. This individual utilized the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry to categorize the data into themes. The following steps, outlined by Kleiman (2004) utilize the descriptive

phenomenological method of inquiry:

- 1) Read the interview transcript in its entirety in order to get a global sense of the whole.¹
- 2) Read the interview transcript a second time - this time more slowly - in order to divide the data into meaningful sections or units.²
- 3) Integrate those sections/units that you have identified as having a similar focus or content and make sense of them.
- 4) Subject your integrated meaningful sections/units to a process that is known as free imaginative variation.
- 5) Elaborate on your findings - this includes descriptions of the essential meanings that were discovered through the process of free imaginative variation.
- 6) Revisit the raw data descriptions again in order to justify your interpretations of both the essential meanings and the general structure. You really do have to prove that you can substantiate the accuracy of all your findings by referencing to the raw data. (p. 13)

Once themes were identified through the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry, the raw data was critically analyzed. This critical analysis was completed through the review of data in an unstructured interview with the researcher. This step was used as a method to move beyond the descriptions or core concepts of the experience and to seek meanings that are embedded in lived experiences (Reiners, 2012); essential meanings were discovered; a structure was articulated; and the raw data verified the results. This process was necessary because the “richness” of the phenomenon lies in the raw data (Kleiman, 2004, p. 17).

¹ “The global sense is important for determining how the parts might be constituted which is detailed in the next step. In order to achieve maximum openness, the reading takes place within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction which is maintained throughout the process of the analysis” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 14).

² “Each meaning unit is determined when the researcher experiences a shift in meaning as he or she rereads the description. Meaning units are rendered in the words of participants” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 14).

Possible Risk and Discomforts to Subject

There was minimal risk to the participant through this phenomenological study, as the participant was the researcher.

Special Precautions to Minimize Risks or Hazards

For the purposes of this study, the subjectivity of the data collected was essential. Therefore, the interpretive phenomenological method was utilized as it acknowledges a debt to symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1995). Symbolic interactionism focuses on how meanings are constructed by individuals within both a social and a personal world. In order to minimize the researcher bias, an independent reviewer was asked to exercise the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry to the TST results. The independent reviewer analyzed the raw data and engaged the researcher in an unstructured personal interview to identify meaning and understanding of the data. The independent reviewer was a master's level art therapy clinical supervisor.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This arts-based phenomenological study was designed to explore the evolving identity of a graduate art therapy student. The major findings of the assessment were as follows: 1) The combination of art making, the Twenty-Statement Test (TST), and an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis created a framework that facilitated the exploration of the evolving identity; 2) Different media were used by the participant weekly to answer the question, “Who Am I?” and consequently elicited different results for the descriptive section of the analysis; 3) Through the employment of this project, this researcher gained an understanding of the influences that have shaped identity development beyond those of familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational dynamics; 4) The interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis informed five themes of evolving identity that were unique to this participant. These themes included: Diverse, not fitting in, vulnerability, structure, and personality; 5) New insights of self were established through the exploration of identity development.

The independent reviewer and the researcher simultaneously examined the images and the statements of the TST through a semi-structured interview (see Appendix F-M). After cataloging the statements into the categories (familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences), the category labeled “other” was used to create a general list of conceptual connections based on the semi-structured interview process (see Appendix C-E). Through this process of cataloging the statements, five themes unique to the researcher were developed. The themes were: diverse, not fitting in, vulnerability, structure, and personality. Within each theme a variety of statements were cataloged making up 84% of the numbered statements.

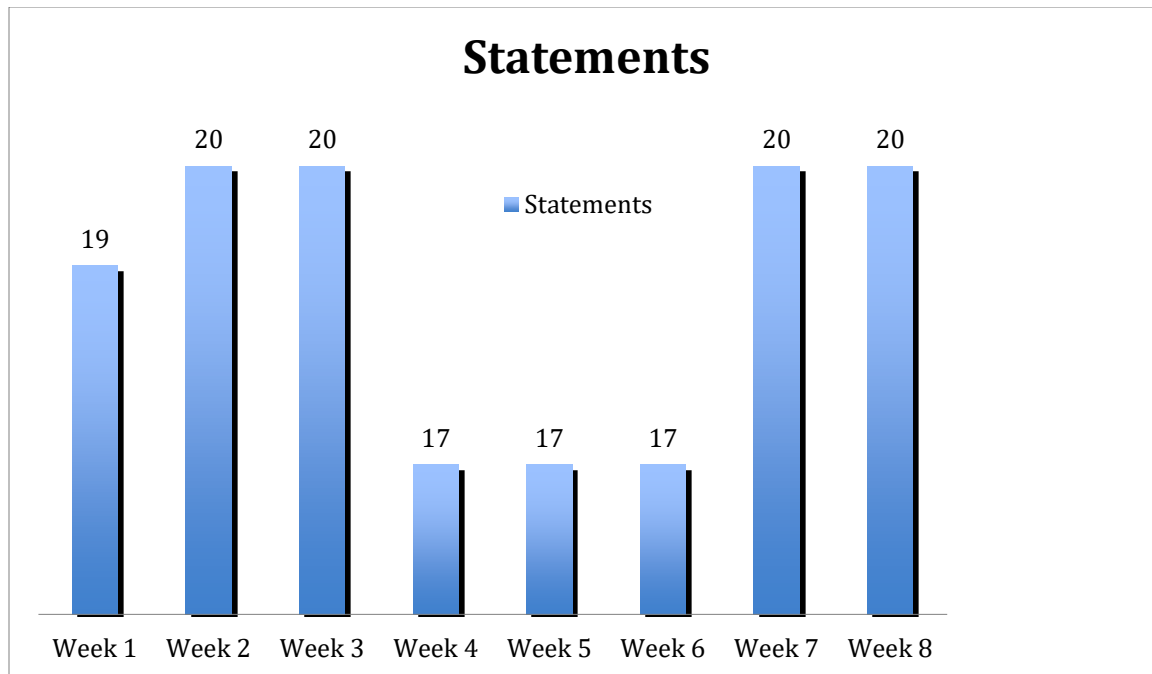


Figure 1. The weekly number of statements completed in response to the question, “Who am I” are represented in this figure. This displays the results of the weekly TST. The data demonstrates that there were nineteen statements produced during week one. Twenty statements were produced during weeks two, three, seven and eight. Within weeks four, five, and six, the researcher yielded seventeen statements.

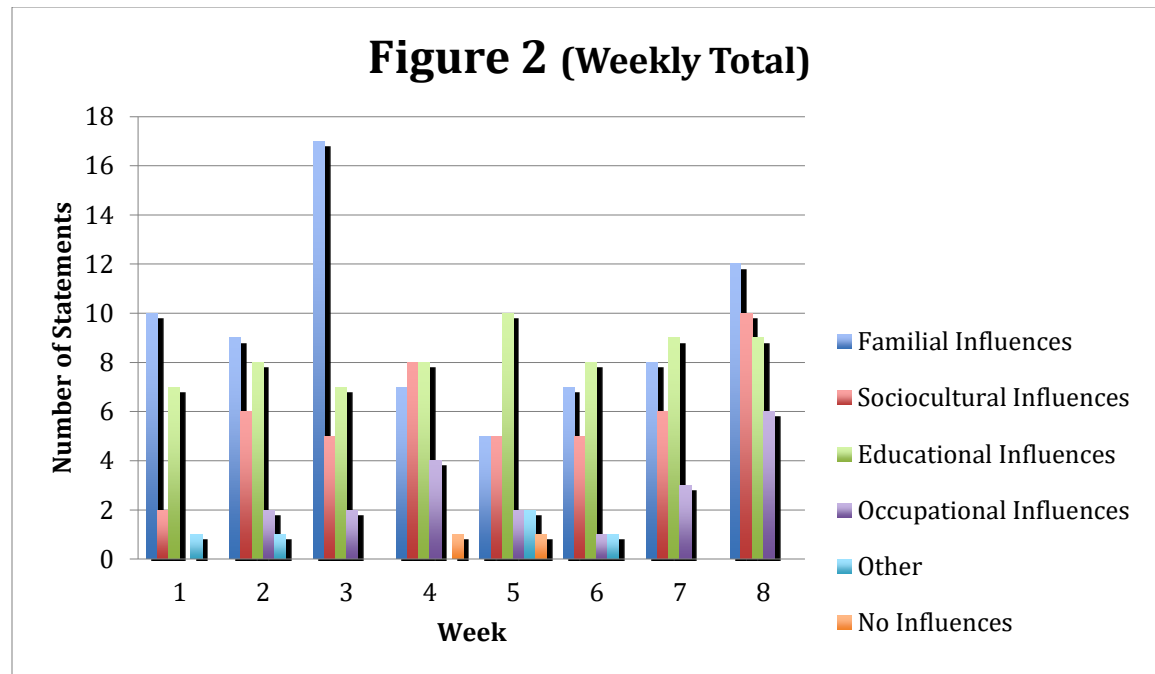


Figure 2. Total number of statements each week based on categories is demonstrated within this figure. The weekly totals are as follows: familial influences with 10 (week 1), 9 (week 2), 17 (week 3), 7 (week 4), 5 (week 5), 7 (week 6), 6 (week 7), 12 (week 8) statements; sociocultural influences with 2 (week 1), 6 (week 2), 5 (week 3), 8 (week 4), 5 (week 5), 5 (week 6), 6 (week 7), 10 (week 8) statements; educational influences with 7 (week 1), 8 (week 2), 7 (week 3), 8 (week 4), 10 (week 5), 8 (week 6), 8 (week 7), 9 (week 8) statements, occupational influence with 2 (week 2), 2 (week 3), 4 (week 4), 2 (week 5), 1 (week 6), 3 (week 7), 6 (week 8) statements; other influences with 1 (week 1), 1 (week 2), 2 (week 5), 1 (week 6) statements; and no influences with 1 statement on weeks 4 and 5. The sums of the statements represented within the figure are greater than the total number of statements produced within the project, because several statements were cataloged under several different categories.

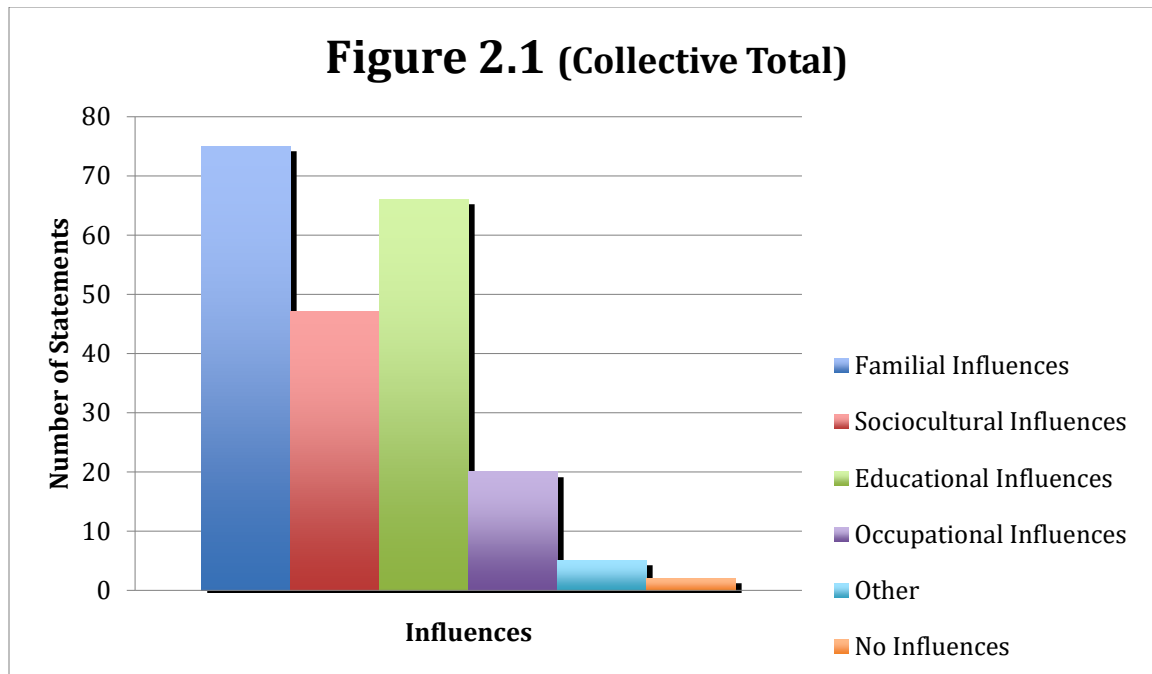


Figure 2.1. The combined totals of statements per category are represented within this figure.

The collective totals include: familial influences with seventy-five statements, sociocultural influences with forty-seven statements, educational influences with sixty-six statements, occupational influence with twenty statements, other influences with five statements, and no influences with two statements. Similar to Figure 2, the sum of the statements within this figure exceeds the total number of statements produced because each statement was able to represent more than one category.

Table 1 displays the statements that are categorized under each theme and the total percentage of statements comprising the themes. The percentages are as follows: diverse 13.82%, not fitting in 12.5%, vulnerability 30.92%, structure 18.42%, and personality 7.89%. The number of statements that were not identified within the themes consists of 15.45% of the total number of statements.

Table 1

Thematic Categories and Accompanying Statements

Themes	Thematic Statements	Number of times the statement was listed	Percentage of statements
Diverse		21	13.82%
	Flexible	1	
	Cross	1	
	Multipurpose	2	
	Layered	2	
	Similar materials in different presentations	2	
	Pieces of different puzzles	1	
	Relevant in different settings	1	
	Contrasting	1	
	Parts of self overlap	1	
	Undefined shapes	1	
	Adventurous	1	
	Murky	1	
	Patchy	1	
	Traveling different pathways	1	
	Abstract		
	Diversity	4	
Not Fitting In		19	12.50%
	Unique	5	
	Unlike other mountains	1	
	Imperfect	1	
	Off center	1	
	Not able to stay within the page	1	
	Nameless	1	
	Misunderstood by strangers	1	
	Holes	1	
	Messy	1	
	Beautifully ugly	1	
	Multiple messages	1	
	Sketchy	2	

	Leave impression	1	
	Tangled	1	
Vulnerability		47	30.92%
	Dark cloud	1	
	Broken	1	
	Residing in darkness	1	
	Lost	2	
	Fragmented	1	
	Burnt	1	
	Fragile	1	
	Bent	1	
	Blue	1	
	Isolated	3	
	Waterlogged	1	
	Flimsy	1	
	Containing holes	1	
	Missing pieces	1	
	Subject to traffic	1	
	Over stimulated by environment	1	
	Busy	6	
	Eluding life (Avoiding)	1	
	Distracted	1	
	Trauma	4	
	Cracked	2	
	Splatter	1	
	Fast Drying Fixative	1	
	Travel in packs, yet find self alone	1	
	For show	1	
	Want to be free	1	
	Require little to be content	1	
	Unable to be opened	2	
	Distrust	5	
	Vulnerable to strangers	1	
Structure		28	18.42%
	Structure	2	
	Firm base	1	
	Contained by borders	1	
	Independent	2	
	Unattached	2	

	Without structure/ unstructured	4	
	Without lines to guide me	1	
	Crumbling	1	
	Not contained	1	
	Secure	2	
	Strapped down	1	
	Caged	1	
	Colorful background	3	
	House	1	
	Stand alone	3	
	Firm yet soft	1	
	Loosely woven	1	
Personality		12	7.89%
	Resilient	5	
	Kind	1	
	Good listener	1	
	Loyal	1	
	Friendly	2	
	Energetic	1	
	Engaging	1	
Total thematic statements		127	83.55%
Statements not identified with a theme		25	15.45%
Total		152	100%

Note. These data list the statements cataloged within each theme and its ratio of the whole.

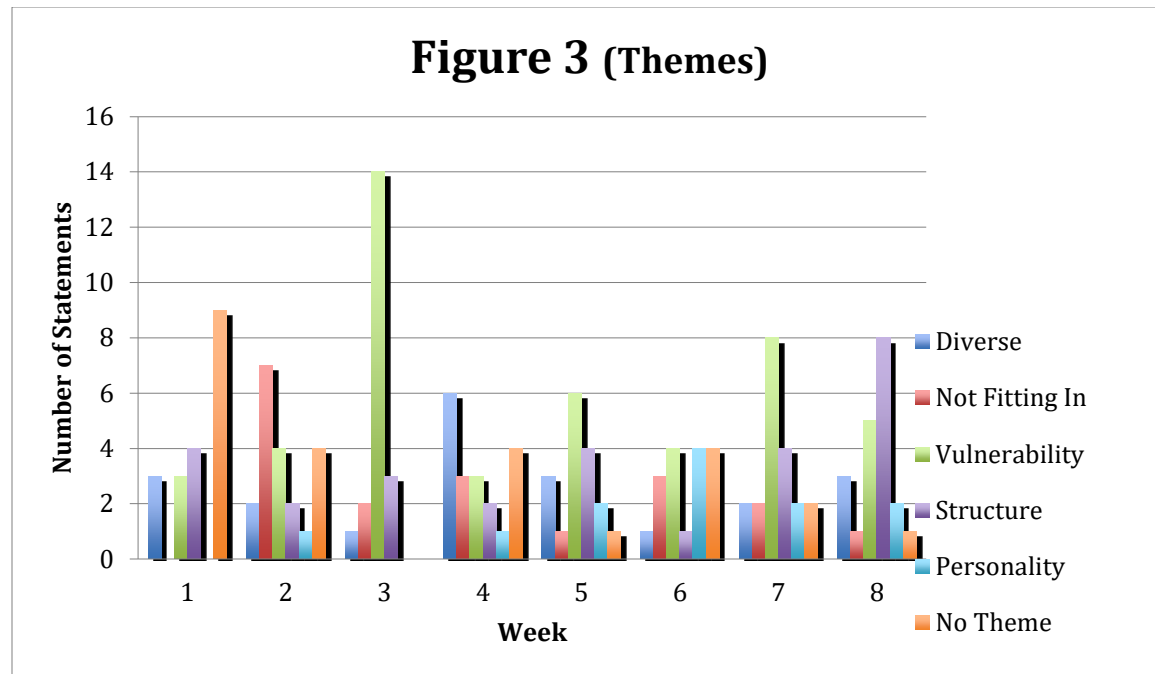


Figure 3. These data display the total number of statements each week that were identified for each theme. The weekly theme totals are as follows: diverse with 3 (week 1), 2 (week 2), 1 (week 3), 6 (week 4), 3 (week 5), 1 (week 6), 2 (week 7), 3 (week 8) statements; not fitting in with 7 (week 2), 2 (week 3), 3 (week 4), 1 (week 5), 3 (week 6), 2 (week 7), 1 (week 8) statements; vulnerability with 3 (week 1), 4 (week 2), 14 (week 3), 3 (week 4), 6 (week 5), 4 (week 6), 8 (week 7), 5 (week 8) statements; structure with 4 (week 1), 2 (week 2), 4 (week 4), 1 (week 5), 4 (week 6), 2 (week 7), 1 (week 8) statements; personality with 1 (week 2), 1 (week 4), 2 (week 5), 4 (week 6), 2 (week 7), 2 (week 8) statements; and no themes with 9 (week 1), 4 (week 2), 14 (week 3), 3 (week 4), 6 (week 5), 4 (week 6), 8 (week 7), 5 (week 8) statements. The sum of the statements within the figure equate to the total number of statements produced through the TST.

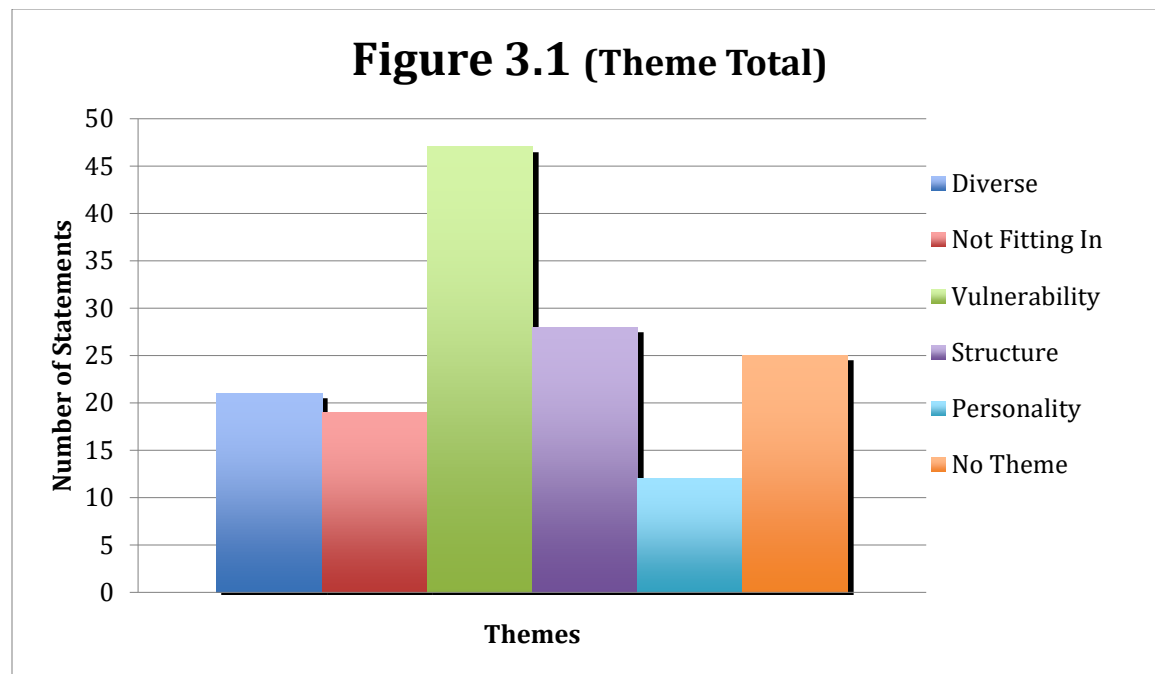


Figure 3.1. The figure compiled all of the statements each week that were identified into themes to show the overall influence of the identified themes. These data demonstrate twenty-one statements support the theme “Diverse,” nineteen statements for the theme of “Not Fitting In,” forty-seven statements support the theme of “Vulnerability,” twenty-eight for “Structure,” twelve for “Personality,” and twenty-five statements support “No Theme.” These data are displayed in Figure 3.1.

The outlined influences supported in the literature review informed the structure of the results and allowed themes unique to the researcher to be identified through the data analysis. This study supported the data of past research, reporting that familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences impacting identity development. The combination of the art making, TST, and interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis developed a framework that facilitated the exploration of an art therapy graduate student’s evolving identity.

Framework

The Interpretive Phenomenological Framework of Identity Exploration was developed based on the data gathered throughout this research to explore an individual's evolving identity. It utilizes a multi-step process of art making, employing the Twenty Statement Test (TST) to provide subjective statements to the art, and utilizing interpretive phenomenology to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomenon. The framework can be found in Appendix N.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this study were impacted by the structure and the content of the project. The structure of this study was developed by multiple factors. These factors include supportive research obtained through the literature review, the interpretive phenomenological framework of the project, the time limit, and the participants.

The literature review provided a supportive base for the study to build from. During the project portion of the study, the findings from the literature review were used as tools to catalog statements of the TST into the outlined categories of influences (familial, sociocultural, educational, occupational, and other). The outlined categories were used as a baseline to inform the major themes developed within the project. Without the outlined categories the study would not have progressed past the identification of these initial influences and the themes would not yet be discovered. In addition, the outline provided a comfortable starting point for the discussion between the researcher and the independent reviewer. Because the categories were outlined, the independent reviewer was able to ask about the origin in which the statement was founded upon with an understanding of her options to choose from. The categories were outlined, providing a deeper conversation about the detail within the specific category. Each category has subcategories that are represented within. For instance, familial influences constitute not only the structure of the family, but also the experience with the family members. Moreover, it appears that the structure and support offered by literature review provided a baseline of understanding within each category. This understanding has provided the researcher with an origin to root each statement. Without this information the researcher would have to formulate a system to categorize statements without specifically highlighting areas of influence.

The Interpretive Phenomenological Framework of Identity Exploration consisted of: 1) the creation of artwork, which utilizes the creative process as the primary mode of exploration; 2) the use of the TST to provide subjective statements that support the artwork created; and 3) the analysis of data using the interpretive phenomenological method to gain insight into what is influencing the phenomenon within the TST and artwork. This framework provided the study with structure, direction and the exploration of the researcher's evolving identity. Through the use of the framework, the researcher was able to exhaust the superficial understanding of self and dig deep to find the true influences of her identity. For example, the researcher's superficial understanding of self was identified in statements such as, "I am a fisherman," "I am in love with the outdoors," and "I am bright." The researcher was able to adapt to the process and decrease her sense of guardedness to produce statements that introduced concepts, which had been deeply hidden, such as "I have trauma in my past." The following discussion will demonstrate the additional ways in which the researcher was able to uncover the influences that impact her evolving identity.

Time limit

Time served the project by providing structure and the opportunity to exhaust the superficial self. The superficial self is the sense of self concerned only with what is obvious or apparent to others (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). The researcher completed the project over the course of 8 weeks. In that time, she was able to ease her guarded response to the process, moving past weekly events, and allow self to express the underlying identity. The length of the process, allowed the researcher to move through the phase of skepticism and avoidance and become invested and trust the process.

Time was also limited within the creative process and the completion of the TST. The researcher was allotted 45 minutes to create. This time limit was easy to follow as the researcher created smaller pieces to avoid interrupting the creative process. For the remainder of the session the participant completed the TST, which lasted 12 minutes. This portion of the project was the most challenging for the researcher. The researcher was apprehensive to complete statements that described the artwork. The researcher was asked to create statements that answered the question “Who am I?” when studying the artwork. This was challenging because the abstract artwork led to abstract statements. The researcher had trouble understanding how the statements answered the question. The time limit for this portion of the project cut the researcher’s statements short, as the researcher was unable to finish at times. The researcher was relieved to hear the timer sound during the TST, as it relieved her from the task.

The data analysis was not limited in time; however, the intention was to complete the data analysis within one session. The researcher and independent reviewer analyzed the data in 2 sessions that lasted 3 hours each as a result of emotional exhaustion after analyzing half of the data. The time taken to complete this step informed the researcher that the data analysis of the project needs to be divided in to multiple sessions. The information reviewed provoked emotional exhaustion in both the researcher and the independent reviewer. Accordingly, the separation of review would increase the attention to details, reduce error, and reduce burnout for the independent reviewer and the participant. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks to this structure. This could interrupt the flow of the process and when reconvened the same flow might not be able to be reproduced, and there is the potential that the information discussed within the first session may be challenging to recall after time has passed. This process may need to be adapted depending on the circumstances of the setting in which it is implemented in.

Art making

The process of art making provided the researcher the opportunity to explore one's self in a non-threatening way. The classroom provided access to a variety of materials, which brought diversity to the chosen media each week. The process of creating artwork provided the researcher with a means to express and explore self when asked 'Who am I?' The artwork proved relevant beyond its initial creation, as it was referenced throughout the steps following the initial creation. During the data analysis, the artwork was helpful in reminding the participant about the experience during the creation. Without the reference of the artwork, the statements could inform many possible themes not originally intended. Thus the artwork serves many roles within the project.

The researcher was trained as a fine artist and had often turned to art as an outlet. Within this study the process of art making provided a non-threatening avenue for the researcher to explore one's evolving identity. The researcher was comfortable with the idea of creating and experienced little to no apprehension as a result. Art making, in general, provides the creator the freedom to express self through different media. Art making can also be an opportunity to explore symbols or unconscious material that appear within the artwork. Unconscious material emerges within the art and is processed, gaining insight into the hidden material. Creating art can also ease one's apprehension because the art becomes the place of projection and externalization. The process of describing something outside of self rather than describing self is much less threatening.

Each week the researcher began by exploring the cabinets of art supplies, paper and canvas options, 3-dimensional materials, and even the bolts of fabric around the room. She selected the media, brought the supplies to the table, and without hesitation, began to create.

During the first week, the researcher was quick to choose a familiar media. The researcher created with chalk pastels on a sheet of 24x18 inch white paper. The researcher was guarded when creating because the process was unaccustomed and the outcome was unknown. The researcher began by making stokes on the page, which was later identified as a mountain range. The subject within the artwork was unplanned. The first subjects created were the mountains and dark cloud, which were identified as representing the family structure. The researcher personified favorite hobbies through the inclusion of a shack, field of sheep, and a fishing hole. The researcher interpreted the question “Who am I?” in a literal sense. This was displayed with little attempt of going beyond the superficial understanding of self; as the researcher illustrated information that was well know to self and others. The image created was bright in coloration. In addition, the line quality exhibited perseveration, which was indicative of the anxiety experienced during the creative process (see Appendix F).

On the second week the researcher created a collage of found objects. The image was created on a sheet of 9x12 inch black paper, which was fastened to a piece of cardboard for additional support. The researcher had no thought of the outcome as she began to scavenge through the drawers of old knickknacks and miscellaneous objects. The researcher gathered unrelated objects and laid them out on the table. The researcher organized the pieces strategically and transferred them on to the black sheet of paper. Hot glue was utilized as a fixative in this session. The researcher was calm and at ease throughout the creative process. There was still a sense of guardedness about the researcher as she related the pieces to the researcher’s sense of self. The pieces selected included an old metal broach, the interior of a watch, four slender nails, a blank nametag, a marble tile, and a metal piece from a locker/mailbox. The objects represent significant philosophies and memories of the researcher. For example the symbol of time has

always been very important to the researcher as time holds such power and control in her life. The researcher is generally busy and time enforces limits/deadlines, structure, opportunity, and anxiety. The researcher used this opportunity to create work that provided meaning and understanding beyond the superficial understanding of self, which was demonstrated in week one (see Appendix G).

The following week the researcher was struggling with the one-year anniversary of a loss of an aunt. The researcher began the creative process by outlining her thoughts through the composition of a personal letter to the deceased. The letter was written on a sheet of unlined memo paper. The letter included details of the thoughts and feelings experienced prior to the session. Then a lighter was wielded to burn the letter. The letter burned quickly and the researcher used water to put out the flames. The pieces remaining were dried and glued on a blue sheet of 9x12 inch paper. The creative process released a great deal of energy and emotion. The process was helpful in allowing the researcher the opportunity to express feelings without judgment from others. The researcher had struggled in the past to process her feelings in relation to this experience, as family is unwelcoming to this discussion or expression. The creation was not met with apprehension. Unlike the weeks prior, the artwork created in this session was reflective of experiences current within that week (see Appendix H).

During week four, the media chosen was paint. The researcher experimented with multiple types of paint including acrylic, crackle glaze, ink, and fabric paint. The artwork was created on a 12x12 inch canvas. The researcher applied ink to rubber stamps and pressed the stamp onto the canvas. The canvas did not absorb the ink entirely, leaving pools of wet ink on the surface of the canvas. Another stamp was used to spread the ink around the canvas in a crisscross motion. During this week, the researcher was comfortable creating and experimenting

with different methods of spreading paint. However, at one point the researcher felt apprehensive to continue for fear that she would mess up. The researcher was concerned about esthetics for the first time (see Appendix I).

Week five continued the use of paint to produce an abstract painting. The artwork was created on a 9x12 inch hardback canvas. The researcher began by painting the canvas black and then wrapped three strands of floss around the canvas at various angles and layers, providing texture to the surface. Then the various acrylic, crackle, glaze, and t-shirt paint was made use of. During the creative process, the researcher experienced a deeper emotional connection. She was not apprehensive about esthetics or the process of creating. The elements within the artwork triggered feelings associated with her absentee father as well as characteristics associated to her graduate education experience (see Appendix J).

The following week the researcher challenged her creative process to utilize different materials, as the two weeks prior employed similar paints. The image was created on a 7x7 inch piece of foamcore. The researcher painted with magenta and white acrylic paint, which was applied with a flat paintbrush. There was no intension in regards of the paint design. A jagged-edged stamp was brushed in a crisscross motion to spread the excess paint. The paint dried quickly, allowing the researcher to use artist pins to draw overtop of the design. The image created was an elephant. The researcher used a symbolic image to answer the question “Who am I?” as she interpreted the qualities of an elephant to describe self (see Appendix K).

During week seven, the researcher experienced a nightmare that influenced her creative process. The nightmare involved a home invasion, resulting in violence and the loss of significant symbols. Characteristics of the experience were represented within the artwork. The image was created on a 9x12 inch sheet of black paper. Colored pencils were applied to create a

neighborhood. The use of color pencils elicited a sense of control. The researcher found it helpful to create this piece of art as a way to process the events within the nightmare. The researcher connected qualities of the image to the emerging themes of personality traits such as being friendly and welcoming as well as the theme of vulnerability. The image took the entire time allotted to create. The artwork demonstrated a whimsical neighborhood to appear as a safe place; however, the image evoked feelings of danger and vulnerability. The visual representation provided the researcher the opportunity to separate self from the nightmare (see Appendix L).

The final creation was a 5x4.5x2.5 inch wire sculpture made with fabric strands on a red polka dot piece of fabric. The researcher created with the intent to create a nest but through the creative process the wire sculpture transformed in to an abstraction. The time creating was calm and thoughtless. The researcher was consumed in the process when the alarm sounded. The researcher began by bending the core of the piece into a triangular spiral frame. Then wrapped colored wire around parts of the frame. The researcher gathered strands of material and wove them through the wire core, filling the center with color. The wire sculpture was positioned on a piece of red polka dot fabric (see Appendix M).

Twenty-Statement Test

The Twenty Statement Test (TST) was completed directly following the completion of the artwork. The researcher had difficulty with this step, as the statements were hard to produce. The philosophy behind the TST explains that the first 7 statements will exhaust the superficial statements and the remaining will introduce the real self. However, it took the researcher time to decrease her apprehension and trust the process. The researcher began the project feeling guarded and unaccustomed to the process of the TST. The process of writing statements became

easier over time. After four weeks, the researcher noticed that she was not experiencing hesitation in terms of the process.

The statements produced in the TST were cataloged in the data analysis. The statements were accurate in describing the researcher's identity. During the weekly completion of the project, the researcher was unsure if the data would reflect her true self. The researcher struggled to produce statements without significant hesitation and frustration. To address this, the researcher reviewed the literature, which related the training and education of identifying formal elements and graphic indicators within artwork to aid in the process of producing statements. After this review, the researcher was able to produce statements much more skillfully. The results of the TST began to inform themes unique to the researcher within the first week and increased each following week.

Data analysis

The data analysis utilized the interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis. This process began by reading the statements of the TST. Then rereading the statements, to catalog them into the outlined influences (familial, sociocultural, educational, occupational, and other). When reading the statements, the independent reviewer referenced the artwork and interviewed the researcher to gain an understanding of the content. The unstructured interview informed the independent reviewer of the appropriate influence. After completing cataloging the influences, the repetitive statements informed themes unique to the researcher. The independent reviewer read the TSTs, while the researcher cataloged the statements into lists of themes. This process was completed over the course of two sessions, as the researcher and independent reviewer were only able to get through 4 weeks of information in the first 3 hours as a result of emotional exhaustion. The data analysis was completed during two sessions totaling 6 hours.

The process of analyzing the data was complex. Not only was the researcher processing artwork and statements from the TST, but also finding meaning and relevance within the contents. This process required the employment of both emotional and mental exertion. The break in the processing was helpful for the researcher and the independent reviewer. Without the break, the process would be rushed. In addition to being exhausting, the researcher also experienced apprehension in regards to the data analysis.

The researcher was apprehensive about the data analysis process as there was no way to know what would surface within the review of the data. Two weeks before the session the researcher wrote the results of the TST electronically in preparation for the review. During this time, the researcher realized that there were multiple suggestions of trauma. This was concerning and curious to the researcher because the researcher had not conceptualized this information about trauma. However, the researcher trusted the independent reviewer, making this process much more cohesive and productive. The independent reviewer served as an educator and supervisor of the researcher for the duration of the graduate education program. These roles provided the independent reviewer a means of establishing a therapeutic relationship with the researcher and obtaining insight in one's background. These experiences primed the trusting relationship between the two and allowed the process to continue in this way. Additionally the independent reviewer reported information about self and her background to provide the researcher insight into the independent reviewer's style and biases.

During the process of the data analysis the researcher and independent reviewer adapted the framework to include a cataloging process in which identify the underlying themes and meanings within the patterns throughout this process. As the independent reviewer was reading the statements aloud, the researcher made lists of the statements in columns of similar origin or

message. These lists were coded on the data sheets simultaneously to record the categorization. The columns were then named themes according to their relevance.

Overall, the process of the data analysis was productive as the data reviewed was able to reveal a great deal of information about the influences that impact the researcher's evolving identity. Although the process was labor intensive the information gathered was able to inform the researcher of themes and influences specific to the researcher's evolving identity.

Participants

The level of investment in the project is of importance. The researcher was invested in the project, illustrated through a willingness to go places she had never gone before. The amount of investment in the project may influence the results. If the researcher was unwilling to express self, the information would not inform the study beyond the understanding of the superficial self. Not only is it important for the researcher to be invested, but independent reviewer's investment can also influence the project.

The independent reviewer selected for this project has served as the researcher's professor, advisor, and supervisor for the duration of her graduate studies. These roles have facilitated a therapeutic relationship in which trust has been established. Prior to the project, the independent reviewer had an understanding of the researcher's history, insight into her family structure, and awareness of events occurred through the duration of the researcher's graduate studies such as family deaths, loss of relationships, health issues, and educational/professional experiences. The selection of the independent reviewer is important because the more established the relationship, the more in depth the process. The study did not delve into therapy because the independent reviewer knew the history of the researcher. Had the independent reviewer been less informed about the researcher, the data analysis would have looked much different. The

researcher might not feel comfortable sharing beyond one's understanding of the superficial self. Additionally, had the independent reviewer been one that the researcher knew but did not trust or felt comfortable with the information shared, the data would have been different. Consequently, the independent reviewer should be informed about the participant and have established trust.

The researcher briefly inquired about the independent reviewer's background. This served more than one purpose. First, the researcher wanted to gain insight and understanding about the attitudes and philosophies that were present in the session such as the style of practice of the independent reviewer, one's focus on specific details versus others, and the experience of family structure and origin. These questions helped the researcher to understand how the independent reviewer might interpret the findings. Second, this brief interview helped the researcher gauge the level of investment of the independent reviewer. The information shared could have made the independent reviewer vulnerable to the researcher. Third, this brief interview established a balance between the independent reviewer and researcher, which brought ease to the researcher. The data provided through the project contained very intimate details in which made the researcher vulnerable to the independent reviewer. The insight into the brief history of the independent reviewer helped the researcher trust that she could confide the intimate details of her life in these sessions. The goal of a phenomenological study looks at the behavior not only through the eyes of the independent reviewer, but also through the eyes of the researcher. Therefore, understanding the independent reviewer's biases and style helps inform the study of what the independent reviewer is experiencing and seeing through this specific lens. This step is not mandatory for the project; however, it is highly recommended.

Originally, this project was designed with the purpose of utilization within a group supervision class. After the completion of the project with an individual subject, it was

demonstrated that the process was productive in gaining insight into self. The environment of exploration on an individual basis provided the opportunity for exploration in a safe context. The implementation of the project within a group runs the risk of increased variability within the results. The breadth and depth of the work may be affected by the group setting. The process of exploring one's evolving identity is most affective when safety has been established. In a group setting, there is an opportunity for safety to be established; however, the level of trust and safety is determined by the sum of the parts. Additionally, the time needed to process the statements may exceed the time allotted within a group setting. Therefore, the framework may be more beneficial on an individual basis.

Content

The content of the project explained the true influences that have shaped the researcher's evolving identity. As the researcher and the independent reviewer were analyzing the statements with the artwork, five themes unique to the researcher emerged. It was identified that early childhood experiences of an unstructured single parent household with an absentee father informed the themes of structure, vulnerability, personality, diverse, and not fitting in. Although this information was familiar to the researcher, she had never really conceptualized the information to be contributed to the early childhood experiences and her upbringing. The researcher had understood her household structure to be of little impact on her life; however, through the employment of the project she realized how many areas of her life had been affected.

Emerging themes. Findings indicated that early development shaped the influences and the reactions to influences. Results suggest that educational influences were cataloged on the basis of structural qualities and content. Through the delineation process, the themes of vulnerability and structure were prevalent in terms of educational influences. The researcher

found that when exploring educational influences, the content of education triggered themes from early experiences with absentee father. For instance, the researcher found as a child she was looking for acceptance and acknowledgement from her father but received inconsistencies that resulted in vulnerability and a guarded sense of self around him. Similarly, the researcher has experienced this same vulnerability and guardedness within the education program, which has exacerbated unresolved issues from childhood, forcing the researcher to acknowledge these issues. The research drew this parallel during the data analysis.

At this time she also noted that her educational experiences influenced her thoughts about structure. As the researcher was raised within a single parent household, she was not offered much structure beyond school. The researcher was easily stressed without structure, and therefore compensated by filling her time with clubs, organizations, and employment. Within the data analysis the researcher associated the statements “I am caged,” “I am restricted,” and “I am tied down” to educational influences. The statements reflect the researcher’s schedule as it consist of ninety-percent education based events, leaving little freedom and availability for enjoyment outside of school. This informed the researcher that educational experiences reflect overcompensation for a need of structure. Moreover, the structure of the education program has been particularly rigorous, leaving little to no space for the researcher to engage in unstructured time of any sort. Too much structure has been uncomfortably restrictive.

Before the researcher’s parents divorced, she experienced a structured environment with a consistent routine. Following the divorce, the researcher was shifted back and forth, interrupting routine and sense of safety. This experience resulted in increased anxiety and feelings of uncertainty. As the researcher quickly approaching graduation, which will remove her from the rigorous schedule into an open, unstructured environment, she is at risk to experience

similar feelings. Although the researcher has struggled to adapt to the additional structure, this has become a safe space. The transition may exacerbate feelings of abandonment, and chaos as the researcher leaves the educational structure. The increased awareness of this information provided the researcher with an opportunity to consider this understanding of self through this time of transition.

The theme of personality emerged throughout the data analysis. The researcher included statements within the TST that suggested personality traits such as “I am kind,” “I am loyal,” and “I am resilient.” The researchers noted these statements as consistent and have minimal chance of changing. The researcher attributed these personality traits to early development and influenced heavily by her family. The researcher was forced to bounce back from chaos as her parents were separated. She experienced a great deal of inconsistencies and flexing between households. In order to soothe the disruptions she had to adopt coping skills to deal with the increased anxiety. Therefore, the researcher became resilient and found ways to reframe the situation in which it was a positive transition. The researcher was encouraged to be kind and loyal to those she cared for through family values and beliefs.

As previously discussed, the researcher identified her uncomfortable feelings in regards to structure. The researcher went on to make connections between the themes of vulnerability, not fitting in, and diverse. In an attempt to avoid her unresolved issues, she scheduled her time. However, in this attempt at avoidance, the researcher found an increased interest within various activities and organizations. The researcher described self as “unique” in that she is not like others in each role she plays. For instance, she is the art student that has never identified herself as an artist. This interest in diverse roles accompanied by guardedness and apprehension resulted in the researcher never feeling as though she fit in. She was interested in many different

activities, professions, clubs, organizations, and people. The researcher never gave one hundred percent of self to a specific role. As a result, the researcher has never really felt as though she fit in with a specific group, role, or profession.

The researcher did not expect the results to be so heavily influenced by unresolved childhood issues. The researcher has not attributed her experiences to her upbringing in the past; however, the project proved that these factors have been more of an influence than the researcher had realized. The results made sense to the researcher, as the researcher was able to identify the meaning and instances in which the themes produced were relevant to her evolving identity. Although there was never much focus on the researcher's unresolved issues from childhood in regards to her absentee father, she has come to understand that these unresolved issues have been exacerbated throughout unrelated areas of the researcher's life, such as her educational, professional, social, and personal experiences. Additionally, the researcher has gained insight into her innate comfort and desire for balance in terms of structure. She is disrupted by transition, flexibility, and overcompensation of structure. Although in the past the researcher felt as though she easily adapted due to her traits of resiliency, imbalance in structure is chaotic for the researcher. The researcher also gained insight into her desire to be busy in diverse roles, challenging her to learn and grow. However, within her attempts to be involved in many areas, she found herself never fitting in. As a child this was encouraged and supported as the researcher's single mother gained acknowledgement and a sense of pride for the diverse achievements of the researcher. At this time, the diverse roles have shaped the researcher to appreciate diversity and understanding of the difference among her friends, colleagues, and clients. The early childhood disruptions made an everlasting impression on the researcher's identity. Through the exploration of identity, the researcher has gained understanding and

awareness of self.

Overall, the researcher gained an understanding of her values and beliefs. In reflecting back to Marcia (1966), the information in regards to identity status suggests that the researcher has obtained an achievement identity status, as there is an occurrence of exploration of alternatives and the achievement of commitment to values and beliefs. Moreover, the researcher has made identity commitments through the process of exploration, bringing a sense of agency or autonomy, self-directedness, integrity, responsibility, commitment, and psychological maturity.

This opportunity for exploration and investigation into the researcher's personal experiences in life, school, and the profession has brought a deeper awareness. This awareness will be beneficial in her personal and professional life because self-exploration and self-acceptance precedes understanding and acceptance of a client. By first understanding her values and beliefs she can be respectful of, and work effectively with, an individual of different values. This process has been an opportunity for the researcher to go where she has never gone before, resulting in a more informed clinician, which may enhance clinical competencies.

Insight obtained through this project allows the researcher to empathize with her clients when assisting clients in the process of exploring identity. The researcher has been in the position in which the client is asked to be, providing the researcher the understanding of the experience. Additionally, the researcher has been informed of material that might elicit counter transference reactions within session. This insight into self can assist the researcher in identifying these reactions. Lastly, the researcher has a better understanding of self that generates a sense of stability and support that can hold the space for clients to engage.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research proposed to explore the evolving identity of an art therapy graduate student. The research also hypothesized that this study would result in the development of a framework to explore the evolving identity of art therapy graduate students. The objectives of this research were designed to further research in the field of art therapy.

The methodological approach was to conduct an arts-based phenomenological study of the evolving identity. This methodology was utilized by the implementation of three parts: the creation of art work, the use of the TST, and the implementation of an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis.

The results of this arts-based phenomenological study show that the combination of art making, the TST, and an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis created a framework that facilitated the exploration of the evolving identity. Through the employment of this project, the researcher gained an understanding of the influences that have shaped identity development beyond the influences of familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences through the identification of themes. The results reported the identification of five themes: diverse, not fitting in, vulnerability, structure, and personality. It was also identified that different media were used by the participant to answer the question, “Who Am I?” Consequently, different results to the descriptive section of the test were produced. Lastly, new insights of self were established through the exploration of identity development.

Recommendations

Clinical applications. This research can be applied to the field of art therapy by implementing the framework to explore graduate student’s evolving identities. The framework

may be helpful for educators to utilize in the context of individual supervision provided for internship, as the exploration of one's evolving identity becomes particularly important within graduate education. It is important because the focus of study is specialized and individual development occurs in accordance with a sense of professional direction (Feen-Calligan, 2005). The framework can be beneficial for art therapists and art therapy graduate students because the process of exploring the evolving identity can result in an increase in self-awareness (O'Gorman, 2005; Bolton, 2006), resulting in a more informed clinician, which may enhance clinical competencies.

Graduate art therapy programs include coursework to assist in the process of reflecting on the evolving identity as they work through an educational program (Bolton, 2006). However, there is little to no opportunity for students to individually explore their identity outside of the classroom and group supervision setting. This study recommends that the framework be utilized on an individual basis, as the lengthy process requires an interview of intimate details of one's life. Accordingly, this framework could be implemented through individual supervision or individual therapy to provide opportunities for exploration and investigation into one's personal experiences in life, school, and the profession. Like the researcher, the individual's insight of identity increases awareness of values and beliefs. This understanding can inform future work as they are establishing proficiency of their foundation of identity. This can be beneficial to the client, as they will be provided the opportunity to engage their awareness of self within the work that lies ahead.

Recommendations for future research. Future research regarding this topic may include the development of a secondary framework, which addresses the themes that were produced during the initial project. The project was only able to identify the themes; however,

the themes hold meaning and value that was unable to be investigated as a result of the parameters of the study. It may also develop a more specific protocol based on the framework provided. This may inform the development of a measurement tool, which assesses the effectiveness of the project. Art therapists might continue to research the topic of identity to adapt the framework to utilize in group settings. This adaption may be implemented in the curriculum to facilitate self-exploration and self-acceptance.

Additionally, this study could obtain information on the influences cataloged in the “other” category. The outlined categories of familial, sociocultural, educational, and occupational influences informed the results of the project and provided a baseline. However, the “other” category provided implications that further research could be conducted to add to the original baseline.

The recommendations for future research may be most useful through the use of systematic literature review, arts-based and phenomenological approaches. There is limited amount of art therapy research through a qualitative lens, while a systematic literature review might collate more literature with the intension of continual expansion. Future research is important for the field, as the field needs more support.

CHAPTER VII

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Who Am I?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Appendix B

The following steps, outlined by Kleiman (2004) utilize the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry:

- 1) Read the interview transcript in its entirety in order to get a global sense of the whole.³
- 2) Read the interview transcript a second time - this time more slowly - in order to divide the data into meaningful sections or units.⁴
- 3) Integrate those sections/units that you have identified as having a similar focus or content and make sense of them.
- 4) Subject your integrated meaningful sections/units to a process that is known as free imaginative variation.
- 5) Elaborate on your findings - this includes descriptions of the essential meanings that were discovered through the process of free imaginative variation.
- 6) Revisit the raw data descriptions again in order to justify your interpretations of both the essential meanings and the general structure. You really do have to prove that you can substantiate the accuracy of all your findings by referencing to the raw data. (p. 13)

³³³ “The global sense is important for determining how the parts might be constituted which is detailed in the next step. In order to achieve maximum openness, the reading takes place within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction which is maintained throughout the process of the analysis” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 14).

⁴ “Each meaning unit is determined when the researcher experiences a shift in meaning as he or she rereads the description. Meaning units are rendered in the words of participants” (Kleiman, 2004, p. 14).

Appendix C

Description Categorization: Write the description of each response from the Twenty Statement Test (TST) in the description section. Then check “x” the appropriate box to categorize the statement by its influence. If the response does not best fit in the provided influences, mark “Other” and indicate/describe a more appropriate category it would fit under. For example: Statement from TST- “I am a girl.” Other- “biological influence”

Description	Familial Influence	Sociocultural Influence	Educational Influence	Occupational Influences	Other
1.)					_____ _____ _____
2.)					_____ _____ _____
3.)					_____ _____ _____
4.)					_____ _____ _____
5.)					_____ _____ _____
6.)					_____ _____ _____
7.)					_____ _____ _____

8.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
9.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
10.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
11.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
12.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
13.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
14.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
15.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
16.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
17.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>

18.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
19.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
20.)					<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
Total					

Appendix D

Collective Total: Total the number of statements in each column for each week. Then add up the total number under each named influence.
 For example: During week 1 there were 6 familial influences, week 5 there was 8, and week 7 there were 3. Total there were 17 familial influences.

	Familial Influence	Sociocultural Influence	Educational Influence	Occupational Influences	Other	Other	Other
Week 1					_____	_____	_____
Week 2					_____	_____	_____
Week 3					_____	_____	_____
Week 4					_____	_____	_____
Week 5					_____	_____	_____
Week 6					_____	_____	_____
Week 7					_____	_____	_____
Week 8					_____	_____	_____
Totals							

Appendix E

“Other” Influences: Provide description/explanation in the comments section to explain the reason for categorizing statements in the “Other” section in the Description Categorization Chart.

	Comments
Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Week 4	
Week 5	

Week 6	
Week 7	
Week 8	

Appendix F



Week One

1. I am a fisherman.
2. I am full of color.
3. I am one of four.
4. I am a product of a single parent.
5. I am adventurous.
6. I am in love with the outdoors.
7. I am a sheep farmer.
8. I am striving for height.

9. I am full of ups and downs.
10. I contain a dark cloud.
11. I am bright.
12. I am independent.
13. I am unattached.
14. I am contained by borders.
15. I am unlike the other mountains.
16. I am busy.
17. I am imperfect.
18. I am focused in on the smaller picture.
19. I am eluding life.

Appendix G

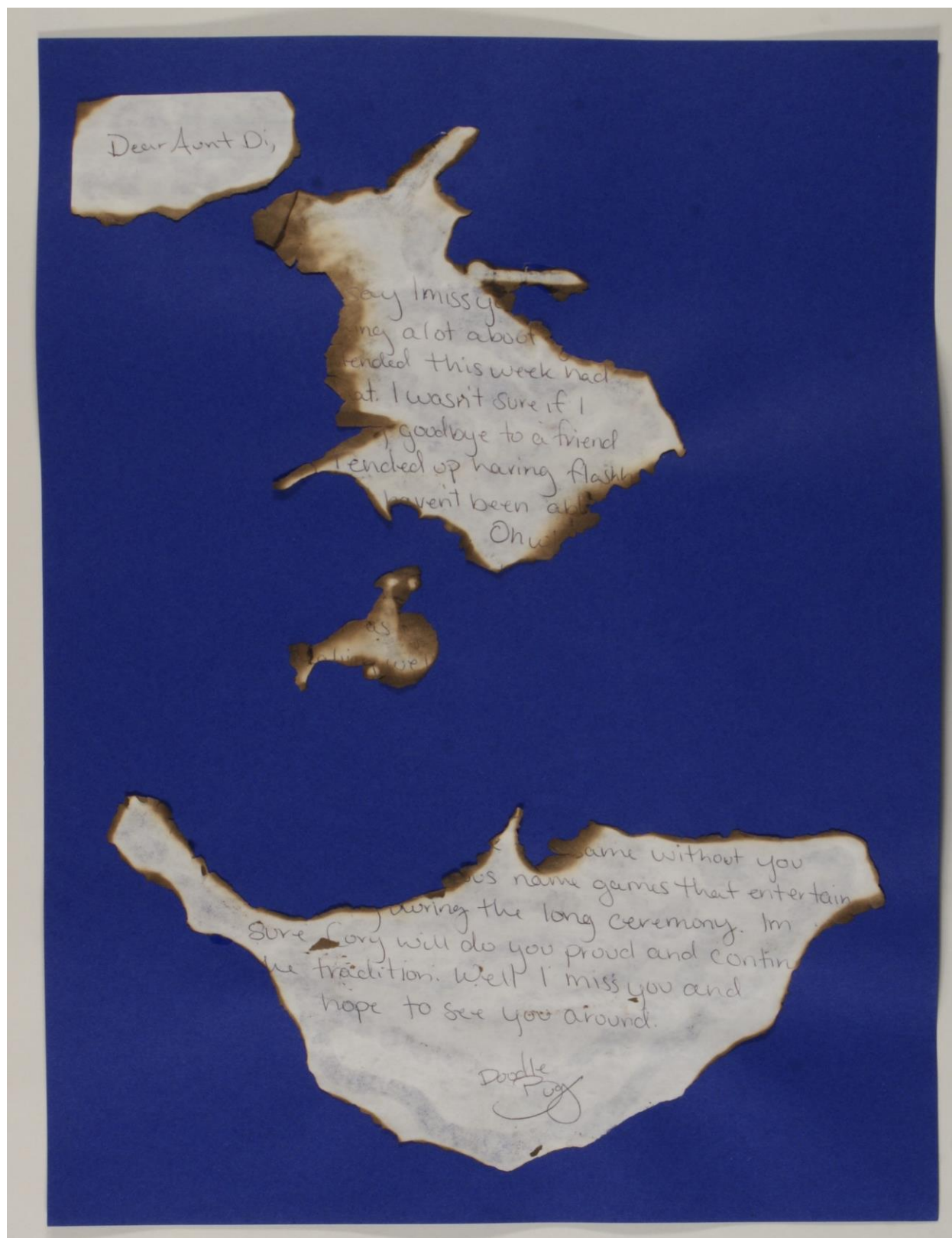


Week Two

1. I am exposed.
2. I am made up of similar materials of different presentations.
3. I am contrasting.
4. I am made up of natural materials.
5. I am rustic.
6. I am bright.
7. I am focused in one area of the page.
8. Parts of self overlap.

9. I am off center.
10. I am unable to stay within the pages borders.
11. I am supported with a firm base.
12. I am able to grow.
13. I am nameless.
14. I contain pieces of different puzzles.
15. I am broken.
16. I am relevant in several settings.
17. I am bound by fast drying heated fixative.
18. I am residing in darkness.
19. I am misunderstood by strangers.
20. I am structured.

Appendix H



Week Three

1. I am lost.
2. I am fragmented.
3. I am burnt.
4. I am fragile.
5. I am in pieces.
6. I am attached to blue.
7. I am barely legible.
8. My message is unclear.
9. I am nearly destroyed.
10. I am not alone.
11. I am isolated.
12. I am unique.
13. I am waterlogged.
14. I am flimsy.
15. I am without structure.
16. I am without lines to guide me.
17. I am undefined shapes.
18. I am containing holes.
19. I am missing pieces.
20. I am crumbling.

Appendix I



Week Four

1. I am messy.
2. I am distracted.
3. I am murky.
4. I am dripping.

5. I am beautifully ugly.
6. I am textured.
7. I am a bleeding heart.
8. I am not contained.
9. I am layered.
10. I have experienced trauma.
11. I contain multiple messages.
12. I am patchy.
13. I am crackled.
14. I am made of many different media.
15. I am multipurpose.
16. I am unstructured.
17. I am metallic.
18. I contained growth and life after darkness.
19. I am traveling on different pathways.

Appendix J



Week Five

1. I am textured.
2. I am lightness in the dark.
3. I am abstract.
4. I am moving.
5. My back is secure.
6. I am cracked.
7. I am chaotic.
8. I am sparkly.

9. I am splattered.
10. I have trauma in my past.
11. I am containing life.
12. I am cross.
13. I am strapped down.
14. I am secure.
15. I am busy.
16. I am caged.
17. I am diverse.

Appendix K



Week Six

1. I am sketchy.
2. I am large.
3. I am kind.
4. I am loyal.

5. I am transparent.
6. I am textured.
7. I have a colorful background.
8. I travel in packs but find myself alone.
9. I am focused from the bigger picture.
10. I am for show.
11. I want to be free.
12. I am an entertainer.
13. I am leaving an impression.
14. I am a good listener (big ears).
15. I am coined “awkward.”
16. I am one to require little to be content.
17. I am attracted to water.

Appendix L



Week Seven

1. I am a resident.
2. I am a house.
3. I am unable to be opened.
4. I am neighbors to the unfriendly.
5. I am away from the city.
6. I am able to view the city from a distance.
7. I am subject to traffic.
8. I am vulnerable to strangers.

9. I am friendly.
10. I am unprotected.
11. I am next to many resources.
12. I am unsure of what lies ahead.
13. I am near abandonment.
14. I am energetic.
15. I am colorful.
16. I am sketchy.
17. I am visually textured.
18. I am contained.
19. I am not permanent.
20. I am occupied.

Appendix M



Week Eight

1. I am colorful.
2. I am structured.
3. I have hard wiring.
4. I am made of different fabrics.
5. I am textured.
6. I am able to stand alone.
7. I am hiding my center.
8. I am tangled.
9. I am odd.
10. I am unique.

11. I am bent in many directions.
12. I am spiraled.
13. I am resilient as I bounce back.
14. I am a product of my experiences.
15. I am firm yet soft.
16. I am engaging.
17. I am busy.
18. I am over stimulated by my environment.
19. I am loosely woven.
20. I am flexible.

Appendix N

Interpretive Phenomenological Framework of Identity Exploration

The Interpretive Phenomenological Framework of Identity Exploration was developed based on the data gathered throughout this research. It utilizes a multi-step process of art making, employing the Twenty Statement Test to provide subjective statements to the art, and utilizing interpretive phenomenology to describe, understand, and interpret the phenomenon.

Location and Time

The study is conducted in a private workspace conducive to creating artwork. The art making process proceeds over the course of 8 weeks. Each session is 60 minutes in length, which includes art making and the completion of the TST.

Participant

This framework will focus on the different influences, both objective and subjective, of the experiences that impact the development of an individual's evolving identity. The participant of this project should be in late adolescence to adulthood and must have the ability to have insight into their experiences. The framework is inappropriate with participants who are either unable to engage in symbolic thinking or are currently not able due to clinical needs. Therefore, individuals diagnosed with intellectual disabilities, schizophrenia, or other cognitive impairments that would inhibit the ability to fully engage in this process as their level of functioning is markedly lower in response to the disturbances (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is important for the individual overseeing this project to have assessed the appropriateness of this process for the individual participants. Since each individual is unique within his or her diagnosis, it should be the discretion of the supervisor or clinician.

Procedure and Materials

Each session will begin by creating artwork in response to the question “Who am I?” The participant will be given 45 minutes to create art. The participant will be provided a variety of materials such as wire, fabric, wood, paint, color pencils, markers, chalk and oil pastels, collage materials, and other art materials readily available to the participant. The participant has the ability to choose materials freely throughout this process.

The participant will use the data collection form (see Appendix A) to answer the question “Who Am I?” while reflecting on the artwork. Following the art making, the participant will complete the following direction: “There are twenty numbered blanks on the page below. Please write twenty answers to the simple question ‘Who am I’ in the blanks. Just give twenty different answers to this question. Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. Don’t worry about logic or ‘importance.’ Go fairly fast, for time is limited” (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954, p. 69). The participant will then be provided 12 minutes for this portion of the task (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection will incorporate the artwork created and the TST responses. These responses serve as a description of the phenomena. To analyze the data produced through the art making and TST, an interpretive phenomenological systematic analysis is used. This project will employ an independent reviewer, and the individual must be someone in which the participant has established a relationship. The relationship should have a foundation rooted in trust and safety, such as a clinician or clinical supervisor. This individual will utilize the descriptive phenomenological method of inquiry to categorize the data into themes.

The data analysis is a multi-step process. 1) Examine the artwork to gain an understanding of the content and elements being described within the statements. 2) Read the TST in its entirety in order to get a sense of the whole (artwork and statements). 3) Read the TST a second time - this time more slowly to compare the statement to the artwork. 4) On the data sheet, check the appropriate section in order to divide the data into the appropriate categories (familial, sociocultural, educational, occupational, or other). Integrate those categories that you have identified as having a similar focus or content and make sense of them. 5) Then, the independent reviewer rereads the statements one at a time, allowing the participant to catalog the statement within a list of similar messages or origins to create different themes. At this time, the independent reviewer marks the TST to identify the theme of the specific statement. 6) Elaborate on your findings - this includes descriptions of the statements, themes, and categories that were discovered through the process. This allows the participant to make connections to the theme and how they have influenced the participant's evolving identity. 7) Revisit the raw data within the artwork and TST in order to justify your interpretations of both the essential meanings and the general structure. 8) Once themes have been identified through the data analysis, the participant will critically analyze the raw data with the independent reviewer. This is a time in which the independent reviewer asks the participant questions about the themes emerged within the cataloging process, moving beyond the statement and its core concept to understand the meanings that are embedded in the experience.